What Is Living and What Is Dead in INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya

PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE

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Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya

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To

Dr G. Adhikari

scientist and fighter for working class

"the more ruthlessly and disinterestedly science proceeds the more it finds itself in harmony with the interests and aspirations of the workers"—F. ENGELS.

PREFACE

This book is intended to be an analysis of our philosophical tradition from the standpoint of our present philosophical requirements. These requirements, as understood here, are secularism, rationalism and science-orientation. In the general fund of traditional Indian philosophy, ideas and attitudes going against these are accordingly viewed as the deadweight of the past—wanting to frustrate our present progress, as they historically did in ancient and medieval India. In the same general fund, ideas and attitudes at least with the potentials of secularism, rationalism and science-orientation are viewed as having living significance for us, though it is felt that we can rightly inherit them in so far as we can enrich them with contemporary knowledge and experience.

In these anxious days through which we are passing, an analysis of the Indian philosophical tradition is much more than a matter of antiquarian curiosity. Without it we are like helpless pawns in the grim political game now going on in which the former type of ideas and attitudes is being freely used by the forces of raw reaction—with or without the patronage of the neocolonialists—but always with a show of patriotic sanction. People are urged to believe that these represent the quintessence of Indian wisdom.

This is a myth and it has to be exposed. The only way of exposing a myth is to turn to facts. The fact sought to be specially emphasised here is simple. Our ancestors—during their long quest for truth—did not bequeath us merely with deceits and false leads. A section of our philosophers might have worked in defence of obscurantism, irrationalism and scripture-mongering caste hatred. But there were also others struggling in their own way against the same

ideological forces, though under limitations historically inevitable for them. If it is wrong to overemphasise their contributions, any tendency to underplay them is also an error—and, what is worse, a dangerous error in the present context. In the course of their struggle against what we are trying to fight today, a section of our traditional philosophers did leave for us highly precious suggestions which we may as well nourish today with full sanction of our national pride. The understanding of the Indian philosophical tradition is in need of degeneralisation: it is often necessary to differentiate between what is living and what is dead even in the same philosophical view.

In view of the vastness and complexity of our philosophical tradition—and in view moreover of the active intervention in philosophical matters by forces not strictly philosophical—a retrospective analysis of it is something more than ease and comfort suggests. There is moreover a long-drawn propaganda in medieval India: ideas favoured by our law-givers are said to have direct scriptural sanction. The critical assessment of their social function thus entails a risk: people shaken suddenly from familiar ideas may feel uncomfortable, if not alarmed. To refuse to face this risk, however, is to evade social responsibility.

Aware of my personal limitations, I have hoped to prepare at best a draft for discussion. If some discussion is actually provoked by the book, that would be the best reward for the labour that it entailed.

Objectivity demands that I mention in this connection my indebtedness particularly to those without whose active help it would have been impossible for me to work on this book. But this is a point on which I have the greatest hesitation, particularly because in trying to be explicit about it I may associate my own shortcomings with others, inclusive of very eminent persons. Thus, though I am anxious to mention that my personal gratitude to Professor Walter Ruben is much more than my limited vocabulary allows me to express fully, I am much more anxious to

emphasise that the errors in this book are only evidences of how inadequately I have been able to use the guidance I have been receiving from him for the last so many years. I am also much indebted to two of my colleagues abroad—Dr N. P. Anikeev of the Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Sciences, USSR, and Professor Dale Riepe of the State University of New York at Buffalo—with whom I am united by the basic purpose of reconstructing the materialistic and scientific tradition of Indian thought. The three of us have been waiting for some opportunity to make a collective pool of our resources and work on a comprehensive study in the tradition of science and materialism in ancient India. I do hope such an opportunity will mature in the future.

For the purpose of planning this book and for sustaining the work on it, I am most indebted to my friend Mohit Sen, who has been long insisting on a book like this for being used in our ideological struggle today. As for actually working it out, I had to depend on my young friend Dr Mrinalkanti Gangopadhyaya of the Visvabharati University, who has always helped me with Sanskrit texts beyond my own depth. For the Tibetan sources, I am indebted to Lama Chimpa of the Visvabharti University and his student Alaka, my wife. Aware of my limitations in writing English, I had to dump my manuscript on another dear friend of mine, M. B. Rao, who had to pass through agonising months brushing up my language. In so far as the book is readable at all, it is more the work of M. B.Rao than mine. The Index is prepared by Sarvani Gangopadhyaya and the manuscript is seen through the press by Subodh Roy: both of them are too dear to me to be ceremoniously thanked.

As for the English versions of the long Sanskrit and Pali passages, I have on the whole depended on Thibaut for *Vedanta-bhasya*, Stcherbatsky and Rhys Davids for the Buddhist texts, R. Hume for the Upanisads and M. Gangopadhyaya for works on the Nyaya-Vaisesika.

Diacritical marks for Indian words are avoided in the body of the book. But all Indian words occurring in the text are included in the Index where diacritical marks are given to indicate their phonetic value.

I convey my thanks to the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, whose fellowship helped me to take up the project and complete this volume.

Calcutta,
31 March 1976

DEBIPRASAD CHATTOPADHYAYA

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PART I

Methodology

Chapter 1

THE BASIC CONTRADICTION IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

1. Indian Philosophical Material

The first fact to be noted about Indian philosophy is the accumulation of an enormous amount of philosophical material in its general fund resulting from a more or less continuous philosophical activity of two thousand and five hundred years, if not more.

The distinct beginnings of this activity are to be traced to the Upanisads, the earlier of which are placed in the seventh century BC. But at least some of the major Upanisads are compilations of preexisting materials. Hence the presumption is that the thinkers whose thoughts are recorded in the Upanisads belong to an earlier period. Besides, the Upanisads are the final outcome of a very long literary activity covering many centuries—how many we do not yet know. Thus the thoughts that eventually crystallise as Upanisadic philosophy have a primitive prehistory of their own. We shall see that it is unwise to overlook the significance of this for understanding Indian philosophy.

Beginning at such an early period, Indian philosophical activity in its traditional sense continues—only with occa-

sional interruptions—up to the time of the most hair-splitting definitions in epistemology, known as the Navya-nyaya. It is usually—though not rightly—called Indian scholasticism. The last of the really prominent representatives of this are Gadadhara and his commentators. They belong to the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

It is not irrelevant to add that most of the accredited leaders of what is called 'contemporary Indian philosophy', in spite of the impact of western thought on them, do their best to seek support for their own views in some traditional view. They are usually so earnest about it that it is difficult to understand them fully without some knowledge of ancient and medieval Indian philosophy. The old tradition is not really extinct in India today.

But let us not complicate matters by trying to include contemporary Indian philosophy in our present account. Let us concentrate on Indian philosophy mainly in its traditional sense.

During the long period intervening between the Upanisads and Navya-nyaya, thousands of books on philosophy were produced in India. Not to speak of having a complete catalogue of all these, we do not even have an idea of their exact number. Only this much is known that the number is somewhat staggering. Here is just an example.

Following the decline of Buddhism in India some time after the eleventh century, most of the works of the later Indian Buddhists become extinct in the form of their Indian originals. But these are not lost, for they survive in Chinese, Mongolian and Tibetan translations. Of these, the great collections of Tibetan translations, called the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*, contain over four thousand and five hundred books, though of course of varying size and significance.

Because of the rather restricted achievements in Tibetan studies outside the medieval monasteries of Tibet, most of these books remain unread by the modern scholars. We know their titles but not their contents—not at least

in more than a vague and general way. Yet these books often promise to be highly significant from the philosophical standpoint. Thus, for example, only a handful of books on logic and epistemology written by the later Indian Buddhists are so far examined by scholars like Stcherbatsky, Vidyabhusana and a few others, and we do not know when the others are going to be analysed by the standard of modern scholarship. Still the idea we already have on the basis of these few texts of what is generally—though wrongly—called 'Buddhist Logic' is, to say the least, most imposing. It covers a very wide range of problems—inclusive of problems that are being hotly debated in contemporary world-philosophy—and covers these with a great deal of competence and sophistication.

But these later Buddhists are concerned not merely with logic and epistemology, nor are they the only philosophers in the country. Their literary output covering other aspects of philosophy is colossal, and so is that of a large number of other philosophers opposing the later Buddhists from various standpoints, inclusive of the standpoint of the earlier Buddhists. The net result is that the number of Indian philosophical works, taken together, verges somewhat on the fabulous.

Not that all these works are equally significant. A very large number of them are just puerile, while many others only repeat what is already said in some other works. But even discounting all these, the number of significant philosophical works is quite high.

Thus on quantitative consideration at any rate, the amount of philosophical material in traditional Indian culture is enormous. We shall presently see what adds qualitative significance to this.

2. Traditional Methodology

Confronted with a philosophical tradition like this, our first question is a procedural one. How to introduce an intelligent order into an overall understanding of it?

Though usually overlooked, a very useful suggestion for the purpose is to be found in traditional Indian philosophy itself. To see this, we have to follow up the implications of the philosophical methodology considered desirable by our thinkers.

What then is this methodology and what are its implications?

The main point of the methodology considered valid in Indian philosophy consists in moving towards a philosophical position through clash of ideas or through confrontation of a thesis with its antithesis—in short, through contradictions. It is important to see how such a methodology develops, particularly because working scientists of ancient India have a great deal to contribute to it.

It is fairly obvious that the source of this methodology is to be traced to the ancient practice of theoretical debate, of which we have glimpses as far back as the days of the Upanisads. Interestingly an Upanisadic word for it is *vakovakya,* which means something akin to what the ancient Greeks call dialectic, i.e. the art of debate by questions and answers. For all that we know, however, in the Upanisadic period itself, there develops a strong tendency at least among a section of philosophers to disparage *vakovakya* as something of mere nominal value.[1] These philosophers, as we shall later see, are keener on preserving their 'secret wisdom', in which it is not easy to be initiated. But such an attitude does not stifle the art of debate and the eventual development of Indian logic from it, thanks mainly to the ancient Indian medical practitioners who are the real pioneers of Indian science and scientific method. Their earliest available work—the huge *Caraka-samhita* compiled not later than AD 100—shows the first clear awareness of the importance of the clash

1. *Ch. Up.* vii. 1.1-4. As a matter of fact everything that can be called science or protoscience in the standard of the Upanisadic age is condemned by the Upanisadic idealists who, as we shall see, are above all the defenders of a magico-mystical approach to reality.

of ideas as an aid to the positive enrichment of theoretical equipment. S. N. Dasgupta[2] is the only historian of Indian philosophy to note this:

> We hear of debates, discussions or logical disputes in literature much earlier than the *Caraka-samhita;* but nowhere was the acquirement of this art deemed so much a practical necessity for earning a living as among the medical men. And, since there is no mention of the development of this in any other earlier literature, it is reasonable to suppose that the art of debate and its other accessories developed from early times in the traditional medical schools, whence they are found collected in *Canaka's work.*

The point is admirably put, though the words "for earning a living" may undermine the theoretical importance of the first systematic discussion of the significance of debate for advancement of knowledge which we read in the *Caraka-samhita.* Debate, we are told, has two forms: destructive and constructive. The latter, which interests us more for the moment, is an aid to the greater zeal for knowledge and its clarification, improves the technique of communication, strengthens conviction by way of removing doubt in the preexisting stock of knowledge, breaks the tendency to insularism even of those that would not normally impart their own knowledge to others.[3]

The art of debate seriously taken raises questions concerning evidence, argument and fallacious thinking. The work on ancient Indian medicine raises and answers these questions and thus builds up the original core of Indian logic or protologic.

But the first work on Indian logic proper is the *Nyaya-sutra* of *circa* the second century AD. It is attributed to a certain Gotama or Gautama and is first extensively commented upon by one Vatsyayana of roughly the

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2. Dasgupta ii. 401-2.

3. *Caraka-samhita* iii.8.15ff; iii.8.28ff, cf. i.25.27. See also Dasgupta ii. 387f and Vidyabhusana 28f.

fifth century. In continuation of his argument, S. N. Dasgupta claims that the protologic of the *Caraka-samhita* "was probably the origin of the logical speculations codified in the *Nyaya-sutras*".

We shall later see how strong are the grounds for this presumption. For the present, one point needs to be specially noted. We are indebted to Gotama and Vatsyayana for the first clear statement of the philosophical methodology as growing out of the technique of debate—or, to be more specific, of the frontal clash of ideas.

We have to follow their terminologies to understand the method.[5]

The first point to be noted about it is the vital dependence of 'final ascertainment' of a philosophical position on the 'critical examination' of a problem. The former is called *nirnaya*, the latter *pariksa*. There can be no *nirnaya* without *pariksa*. This simply means that the minimum precondition of arriving at a philosophical conclusion is *pariksa* or 'critical examination' of the problem.

The second point about it is that *pariksa* in its turn has an essential precondition of its own. This is 'doubt'—called *vimarsa* or *samsaya*. Thus, without 'doubt' there is no 'critical examination' and without the latter no legitimate philosophy at all.

What then is 'doubt'? Gotama and Vatsyayana come out with a remarkable answer to this. Philosophically speaking,[6] 'doubt' is the intellectual situation of being confronted by two philosophical positions, opposing and menacing each other. In Indian terminology, these are

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4. Dasgupta ii.273.

5. Vatsyayana on *NS* i.1.1; i.1.41 & ii. 1.1f. See Chattopadhyaya and Gangopadhyaya NP i.10f; i.127f & ii.7f.

6. Vatsyayana's introduction to *NS* ii.1.1. Gotama and Vatsyayana speak of five forms of doubt, of which the third—*vipratipatti-janya-samsaya* or doubt due to contradictory assertions—is the precondition for philosophical inquiry. See Chattopadhyaya and Gangopadhyaya NP i.96f.

paksa and *pratipaksa* (or *vipaksa*). The English equivalents of these are the 'thesis' and the 'antithesis'.

Thus, in short, there is no philosophy without 'doubt' and there is no 'doubt' without the contradiction of the 'thesis' and 'antithesis'. As Vatsyayana[7] sums up, "Critical examination is nothing but the final ascertainment through the confrontation of the thesis and the antithesis causing doubt".

This is surely one of the most remarkable things ever said in ancient philosophy, not only because it makes *doubt* the startingpoint of philosophy but moreover because it specifies the *preconditions of doubt* itself. Thus the striking view is arrived at according to which without a frontal clash of ideas or a direct confrontation of two positions—of which one wants to negate or annihilate the other as much as the other wants to negate or annihilate the first one—there is no philosophy worth the name.

Contradiction thus constitutes the essential precondition of philosophical activity.

The way in which Gotama and Vatsyayana put this point is surprisingly simple. First, as Vatsyayana[8] says, "Philosophical argument can have no relevance for that which is totally unknown, nor for that which is fully known. What then has it relevance for? It has relevance only for that about which there is some doubt", for it is doubt that constitutes the intermediate region between the totally unknown and the fully known. But doubt has various forms, of which one has special significance from the philosophers' point of view. It is doubt resulting from the contradictory assertions about the same thing—a thesis being confronted by its antithesis. The two, wanting to negate each other, call for a critical examination, and that is the beginning of philosophy.

In accordance with this methodological procedure, the

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7. Vatsyayana on *NS* ii.1.1. cf *NS* i.1.41.

8. Vatsyayana on *NS* i.1.1. See Chattopadhyaya and Gangopadhyaya NP i.10.

first thing an Indian philosopher is required to establish is the very legitimacy of the problem he wants to discuss. The way of doing this is to show that there is an actual doubt with regard to the problem, i.e. to show that there are two contradictory positions taken with regard to it. These are the thesis and the antithesis—*paksa* and *vipaksa* in Indian terminology.

Thus, from the Indian point of view, a philosophical enquiry into the problem of the soul is relevant only because there are two views, asserting and denying its reality. So are the problems of god and the world—in fact any problem about which there is a thesis menaced by its antithesis.

3. The Method in Practice

To claim that all Indian philosophers are equally enthusiastic about this method would of course be an exaggeration. Among them there are indeed those who are opposed to the very spirit of 'critical examination' or rational analysis. They prefer instead to follow the path of faith in the scriptures, considered secure by themselves. The most prominent representatives of this tendency are the extreme idealists, whose hostility to rationalism receives a tremendous boost from the Indian law-givers.[9] In their view reason by itself is of no use and the only useful purpose it can be made to serve is to explain and amplify what is already revealed in the scriptures. Interestingly enough, when they find their own thesis menaced by its antithesis, they cannot ignore in practice the fundamentals of the methodology formulated by Gotama and Vatsyayana. In other words, even those who are against 'critical examination' are often obliged to adopt it in their own philosophical writings. This is evident from the works of practically all the major philosophers of the country.

An Indian philosopher, generally speaking, develops

9. See *infra* Chapter 5.

his own view by first confronting it with its opposite, i.e. the view that negates his own. In Indian terminology, this is called the *purvapaksa*—the thesis of the opponent, or, more simply, the antithesis from one's point of view. Only on the basis of a more or less elaborate negation of it, does one establish one's own thesis, called the *siddhanta*. As the philosopher himself understands, his own thesis can carry conviction only in so far as it successfully negates the counter-thesis that wants to negate his own.

Accordingly, in a serious philosophical work, all sorts of arguments are first offered in favour of this antithesis itself. The antithesis is thus made to appear as sound as possible. Only after this does the philosopher proceed to demolish it in favour of his own thesis. The point of following this procedure is that the eventual refutation of the antithesis, after all possible credit is given to it, is supposed to carry complete conviction for the philosophers's thesis. The effectiveness of the procedure is explained by means of an analogy to the usual practice of the boatman. It is called *sthuna-nikhanana-nyaya* or the logical procedure modelled on the technique of making the anchor-post firm by repeatedly raising it up from the river-bed and then ramming it again into it. Or, as Vatsyayana[10] puts the point, "a philosophical position acquires greater certainty only after being *critically examined* in various ways". We have already seen what he means by critical examination. It means the process of overcoming doubt caused by the contradiction between the thesis and the antithesis. The more one moves through this process, the greater is the worth of one's own view.

4. Historicity of Both Thesis and Antithesis

It is of material importance to note in this connection that the thesis of the opponent or the *purvapaksa*, a more

10. Vatsyayana on *NS* iii.2.25.

or less elaborate negation of which is considered obligatory for advancing one's own thesis, does not represent for one the position of an imaginary opponent. It is the position of some rival philosopher or philosophers, known to have historically defended it. In short, the antithesis or *purvapaksa* has as much of historicity as the thesis or *siddhanta*, in the interest of which the former is negated.

It may be that while depicting the position of an actual rival in the form of the antithesis, a philosopher takes great care to make explicit that which is potentially contained therein. He even explores the possibility of adding more arguments in favour of it than its actual representatives. All this is done with the idea of adding greater conviction to the final refutation of the antithesis. But this means nothing against the basic historicity of the antithesis.

Particularly during the maturer phase of Indian philosophical activity, the Indian philosophers find it peculiarly obligatory to follow this procedure. Without it their own position remains vulnerable. The rival philosophers are already there wanting to establish the supremacy of their own views, which they can do only by negating those that constitute their own *purvapaksa*. The situation of an Indian philosopher is thus already embattled and none can really afford to be indifferent to the battle of ideas that goes on.

5. The Basic Contradiction

With this idea of the methodology of Indian philosophers, when we look back at the enormous bulk of philosophical material they have left for us, the whole thing may not look so bewildering after all. The methodology, both in theory and practice, indicates for us an intelligent procedure for an overall understanding of the Indian philosophical situation. Since, as understood by the Indian philosophers, it is from the confrontation between thesis and antithesis that philosophical activity draws its nourish-

ment, the first point to be understood about the activity as a whole is the basic or the fundamental contradiction in it.

So our startingpoint is a simple question. Is there any problem to the 'critical examination' of which practically all the major philosophers of India are drawn in either directly or indirectly? Or is there any issue on which all of them take sides or the two contradictory solutions of which divide them into two basic and mutually opposite camps? If so, that will give us the clue to the basic contradiction in Indian philosophy.

A broad survey of Indian philosophical literature shows that among the philosophically significant questions discussed in it, there is clearly enough one such problem. It is the problem of the reality of the material world or nature and consequently of the relevance of the philosopher's attempt at a better understanding of it. All the major philosophers of India are directly involved in the controversy over this problem. Besides, a very large number of collateral positions evolved in Indian philosophy are the direct outcome of this involvement.

It is thus the problem of the reality of the material world and the worthwhileness of an inquiry into its nature and constitution that divides the Indian philosophers into two mutually antagonistic camps, whatever may be the nature of the internal differences between the followers of each. Evidently, it is here that we are to look for the basic contradiction in Indian philosophy, which in its turn is the startingpoint for a systematic understanding of the Indian philosophical heritage.

6. Idealism and Its Antithesis

A section of our philosophers wants to prove that the ultimate reality is pure 'spirit'. It is variously referred to as 'soul', 'bare consciousness', 'an indescribable absolute', 'a mass of mere consciousness', and so on. We shall refer to these philosophers as the Indian idealists. Among them

there are terminological and other differences, no doubt. But these are on the whole secondary in importance. What primarily interest us are the fundamentals that unite them.

In defence of their own position, the antithesis or *purva-paksa* which it is at once obligatory for them to negate is the view that the material world is basically real. Whether, philosophically speaking, the denial or damnation of the material world necessarily follows from the idealist outlook, is a separate question which we are not at present discussing. We are trying instead to note a simple fact. All the Indian idealists feel that it is necessary to deny the reality of the material world in order to make room for the exclusive reality of the pure spirit.

Thus, while wanting to deny the world one is confronted with an awkward situation. Experience and reason, which are normally considered valid sources of knowledge, constantly want one to believe that the physical world has a substantial reality of its own. After all, one directly experiences all sorts of material things—sees them, touches them, smells them, and so on. Similarly with the aid of reason, one infers the existence of various things, which, though not directly experienced, are normally believed as real. How, in the face of the evidences like these, can the idealist deny the reality of the material world?

One answer suggested by some later and very sophisticated idealists is that all this is misunderstanding the real nature of the object of experience. We never experience the physical things. What we actually experience instead is our own sensation or idea, called *vijnana* in Indian terminology. But this is not the typical answer of the Indian idealists, who have on the whole a simpler solution of the problem. The verdict of experience and reason, they claim, is not so dependable as ordinarily imagined. One can reasonably depend on it only for crude purposes of practical life, but not in matters profoundly philosophical. The Indian way of putting this is that from the point of view of ultimate truth, no source

of knowledge normally considered valid has any validity. Our experience and reason, far from leading us to the knowledge of the ultimate reality, actually deceive us with a false show. These want us to see matter where there is only spirit. This, we shall see, is one of the main themes of idealism throughout its long career in Indian philosophy. The contempt for the material world has for its counterpart the contempt for the normal ways of knowing.

Rejecting experience and reason, the Indian idealists generally claim that the ultimate reality can be known only in some kind of mystic trance, resulting from prolonged meditation. The main purpose of this meditation is the cultivated withdrawal of interest from things external. They moreover want ordinary people to believe that the scriptures or *sastra*-s are the real guides to meditation, because in these are already recorded the revelation of truth.

These philosophers are very serious about another problem. Though the material world has no reality of its own, the fact remains that it somehow or other appears to be there. How is this appearance to be accounted for?

The usual answer of the Indian idealists is that this is because of some deep-rooted defect in ourselves. As a consequence of this defect we not only fail to know the ultimate reality but moreover project in its place something like a phantom creation of our own. The defect is sometimes called our perverse imagination, sometimes simply our crass ignorance. The removal of this defect is naturally considered the highest human ideal. With its full removal, one is supposed to attain freedom—called *moksa* or *nirvana*—which is freedom from being obsessed with the false show of the material world.

These are some of the main points of the Indian idealists.

But the other section of the Indian philosophers—in fact the vast majority of them—is strongly opposed to the tendency of denying the reality of the material world. The material world, far from being the imaginary product

of some alleged defect in ourselves, is viewed by them as basically real. Broadly speaking, these philosophers represent the antithesis of Indian idealism. It is for us to see how much of critical scrutiny is needed today to determine the hard core of this antithesis as distinct from its periphery and how far-reaching are the consequences of this discrimination for the right understanding of the Indian philosophical situation. For the present we shall mention only a few preliminary points.

In defence of their view of the reality of the material world, these philosophers find it obligatory to consider idealism with all its ramifications as representing their own antithesis or *purvapaksa,* which is to be rejected or refuted. This accounts for the extensive discussions of the refutation of idealism we have in Indian philosophical literature. Much of this is designed to expose the technical errors of the arguments on which the idealists depend. But much of it is also positive in content and emphasis. Thus, as against the idealist condemnation of normal experience and reason, the opponents of idealism have to defend these sources of knowledge, though it may be that all of them do not do it with the same consistency. Besides, the mere acceptance of the reality of the material world does not make one a philosopher. As philosophers, the opponents of idealism have to work out positive views of the nature and constitution of the material world. Thus among the representatives of the antithesis of idealism the need is felt to evolve a satisfactory theory of the nature of matter. The most important of these theories is that of the atoms (*paramanu*), the positive significance of which for the Indian philosophical tradition can hardly be exaggerated.

But, all this does not allow the idealists—or more specifically the later representatives of Indian idealism—to remain complacent with the stock of ideas they inherit from their predecessors. They have to enrich this stock in every way they can. This is done mainly in two ways. First, by negating the new and newer considerations with

which their opponents negate idealism. Secondly, by exploring fresh possibilities of directly defending the idealist outlook, which is done by adding to it considerations more refined than the older ones. This zeal of the later idealists led them to develop novel collateral positions in philosophy that go to the aid of the idealist outlook.

But the same is broadly true also of their opponents. They have also to be constantly on the move—always seeking sounder ways of meeting the idealist offensive, always trying to work out better positive considerations in defence of the reality of the material world and the validity of our normal ways of knowing it.

In this way there goes on for centuries the basic controversy between idealism and its antithesis, though in the history of Indian philosophy all the representatives of the latter are not fully united on all points.

The reasons for looking back at this controversy as the basic contradiction in Indian philosophy are quite on the surface. It is about the only controversy in the whole history of Indian philosophy to which no significant philosopher can afford to be indifferent. There is none in Indian philosophy—none at least with real philosophical eminence—who is not committed either to idealism or to its antithesis. To an Indian philosopher, idealism is either the *siddhanta* or the *purvapaksa*—the thesis or the antithesis. Besides, a large number of problems discussed in Indian philosophy—specially those that retain significance for our times—are ultimately rooted in this controversy. Such are the problems of the nature and objects of knowledge, of the criterion of truth, of the nature of dream and sense-illusion, of the meaning of causality, of the relation between parts and whole, and so on. To these is to be added the fundamental question concerning the nature of matter, the most serious preoccupation with which leads a section of the opponents of idealism to develop a very advanced form of the theory of the atoms—its richness being derived from the persistent defence of it against the prolonged idealist offensive.

7. Sectarian Controversies

What is said above does not at all mean that the only problem discussed in Indian philosophy is directly or indirectly connected with that of the reality of the material world. In the Indian philosophical literature we come across discussions of various questions that have little or no bearing on the controversy between idealism and its antithesis. But such questions are of obvious secondary significance.

Thus for example some of the questions, though enthusiastically discussed by the traditional Indian philosophers, have for us at best an extraphilosophical significance. In spite of appearances, it is difficult to imagine that they ever have more than a restricted religious value. The most important of these are the purely sectarian questions, which somehow or other find a prominent place in the writings of the idealists as well as their opponents. An Indian philosopher usually prefers to be known by his sect-name. He is either a Vedantist or a Buddhist, a Jaina or a Mimamsaka, a Naiyayika or a Samkhya, and so on. Moreover, as the follower of a specific sect, he has ostensibly little or nothing to share with the followers of the other sects and thus maintains his sectarian isolation.

At the same time, it is of considerable interest to note that from the genuinely philosophical point of view they often give in fact no more than a merely nominal importance to their own professed sectarianism. When confronted with the most serious philosophical issues, they easily break through their otherwise sectarian isolation and build up united philosophical fronts as it were with thinkers belonging to their rival sects. Thus the Advaita Vedantists would have normally nothing to do—not even have a dialogue—with the later Buddhists known as the Mahayanists, who show the most intense sectarianism among the Buddhists themselves. At the same time when it comes to the question of a serious philosophical defence of idealism, the Advaita Vedantists eagerly borrow from the

Mahayana Buddhists, just as the latter show no hesitation to work out the fundamental suggestions of the Upanisads, normally considered the scriptures of their aliens.[11] This philosophical fraternity between the Vedantists and Buddhists is liable to be overlooked by us if we are misled by the face value of their own sectarianism.

The same is often true of the opponents of idealism. They are eager to be known by their sect-names like Jaina, Mimamsaka, Nyaya-Vaisesika, etc. In their refutation of idealism, however, these philosophers work in such a close cooperation that passages can easily be transplanted from the writings of some of them to those of the others without any serious violation of their philosophical spirit. This does not mean that the Jainas and Mimamsakas represent the antithesis of idealism in the same sense as the Nyaya-Vaisesikas do. But this means that there is a great deal in common among these philosophers in spite of all their sectarianism.

8. Other Controversies

Sectarian controversies apart, there are many controversies of definite theoretical significance. However, a large number of these are controversies either within the general framework of the idealist outlook or within that of its antithesis. Here are only two examples.

We read about a long-drawn dispute between two south Indian philosophers, Buddhapalita and Bhavya. Peculiarly enough, both are equally keen on proving that reality is pure spirit and the world of change and multiplicity is completely fictitious. Where they differ—and differ sharply—is on the question of the right technique of proving this. Buddhapalita, like Zeno of ancient Greece, believes in pointing to the hopeless inner inconsistency involved in any tendency to

11. See *infra* Chapter 2.

impute reality to the world. But Bhavya thinks that this technique is better supplemented by positive logical considerations or 'independent proofs', supposed to establish the same conclusion of course. This the followers of Buddhapalita vigorously resist, for they feel that it has the risk of admitting the validity of logic, which—as committed idealists—they have to avoid. Candrakirti, a follower of Buddhapalita, raises a storm of controversy against Bhavya and sometimes goes to the extent of giving the impression that the latter represents his main philosophical opponent as it were.

As an example of the inner controversy among the opponents of idealism, we may mention here the very interesting dispute among our advanced atomists over the nature of the change involved, say, in the baking of an earthen pot. An unbaked earthen pot looks blackish. When fired in the furnace, it becomes reddish all over. How is this fact to be explained from the viewpoint of the atomist? A section of them argues that the emergence of the red colour in the baked pot is due to the action of fire on each individual atom of earth in the pot. As each of these atoms acquires the quality of red colour, the pot as a whole looks red. According to the other theory, the earthen pot as a whole acquires the new quality, its structural unity remaining the same throughout this process of transformation. Notwithstanding the considerable amount of scientific interest of this controversy in its historical context, it is after all a controversy, among the opponents of idealism, and among them, only the Vaisesikas and Naiyayikas are drawn to it.

There are also highly specialised controversies in Indian philosophy in which only some selected philosophers take special interest. Such are the controversies concerning the exact nature of the inferential process and the exact number of logical fallacies and their definitions. Those who are primarily interested in these problems go indeed into their great details. But all the Indian philosophers are not

equally interested in such problems, which have thus only a limited appeal.

All these controversies are there no doubt. But none of these is indicative of the basic philosophical struggle going on in ancient and medieval India. It is therefore of importance to note that such controversies apart, there is also one to which no major philosopher is indifferent and on which, moreover, hinges a number of other philosophical controversies most of which retain a great deal of significance even in our own time. This is the controversy between idealism and its antithesis.

9. Summing-up

We have thus arrived at the startingpoint for introducing the Indian philosophical material, bewildering though it may at first appear. Since, as understood by the Indian philosophers themselves, there is no philosophy without the clash of a thesis with its antithesis, and since, historically speaking, the basic contradiction in Indian philosophy is that between idealism and its antithesis, we may hope to introduce the desired order into our discussion by following up this contradiction.

PART II

Idealism

Chapter 2

INDIAN IDEALISM : DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1. THE UPANISADS

Between idealism and its antithesis in Indian philosophy, it is on the whole easier to follow the career of the former. Our description of it begins with the Upanisads, because philosophical idealism is first clearly foreshadowed in one trend of the speculations recorded in these texts.

In the Upanisads, idealism is attributed to kings like Ajatasatru, priests like Yajnavalkya and even to the gods like Prajapati and Indra. We shall try later to trace the social roots of this philosophy. For the present let us note only its main features.

The word for the ultimate reality generally used in these texts is *brahman*. Though said to transcend the possibility of any positive description in terms of our mundane expressions like 'this' or 'that'—and hence usually referred to as the indescribable (*anirvacaniya*)—it is somehow or other also identified with the soul or self, the Upanisadic word for which is *atman*. Hence, the brief description of Upanisadic idealism is the equation of *brahman* to *atman*. This soul or *atman* is understood by the Upanisadic idealists sometimes as 'a mass of mere consciousness' (*vijnana-ghana*), sometimes as 'bare consciousness'

(*cit*), which is also supposed to be of the nature of 'pure bliss' (*ananda*) and 'bare existence' (*sat*).

The pure spirit, thus raised to the status of the ultimate reality, results in the tendency of undermining the reality of nature or the material world, which, in moments of metaphysical ecstasy, is viewed as something like the dream-phantoms produced by ourselves. In any case, the material world or nature is declared by the early idealists as having no substantial reality of its own. Consequently, the positive knowledge of nature in any form—anything that can be called science in the standard of the age—is to them as nothing but empty fable, having at best only a nominal value (*naman*).

As recorded in the Upanisads, the idealist outlook is expressed mainly in the form of some 'mystic experience', rather than a philosophically worked out theory in the later sense. Certain thinkers of the age somehow or other feel that it is the 'secret wisdom' which they possess, though without being yet aware even of the need of proving why it is to be called wisdom. There are no doubt occasional attempts at justifying the view with arguments and analogies. But these arguments are too rudimentary and the analogies often too clumsy to carry conviction. In short, idealism, as first foreshadowed in the Upanisads, is inevitably in its early rudimentary form.

2. Mahayana Buddhism

There is moreover no ground to think that the view has an immediate success. We do not even hear about it for about six hundred years after the Upanisads. Round about the first century AD it is revived again, and, strangely enough, this time by a group of thinkers who by creed profess to be the followers of the Buddha. As contrasted with the older and orthodox Buddhists—who are despised as the followers of the Meaner Path or Hinayana—these neoidealists announce themselves as the followers of the Noble Path or Mahayana. The names are their own con-

coctions, and so also are the scriptural texts on the authority of which the socalled Mahayana Buddhists want to reestablish the idealist outlook.

Why Buddhism takes such a queer turn is a difficult question, to which we shall later return. For our present purpose let us have a few words on the nature of these new scriptural texts. Though defending basically the same idealist philosophy as already foreshadowed in the Upanisads, the Mahayanists, as ostensible Buddhists, are obliged to conceal their actual indebtedness to the Upanisads, which, by the standard of their own religious affiliation, are supposed to be the scriptures of the heretics or 'outsiders'—the *tirthika*-s.

This lands the Mahayana Buddhists in a peculiarly difficult situation. Despising normal experience and reason, Indian idealism is driven by its own inner need to seek its ultimate sanction in the scriptural declarations. But the Mahayana Buddhists find their own older scriptures franklv opposed to the tendency of metaphysical enthusiasm in general and to the idealistic speculations of the Upanisads in particular. This obliges them to fabricate a fabulous mass of scriptural works that suit their own purpose. The scriptural authority of these they hope to establish with all sorts of miraculous talks cleverly spread. Into these forged scriptures, generally known as the *Mahayana-sutra*-s, are already crammed the basic features of the Upanisadic idealism, so that these can now be reread by them with the full sanction of their own sectarianism.

At the same time, what the Mahayana Buddhists add to the Upanisadic idealism, is, from the idealist standpoint, most spectacular. The mere declaration of the idealist outlook in its naive and rudimentary form is perhaps all right for the Upanisadic age. Indian philosophical activity as such was then at its infancy. In the altered conditions of later times the defence of basically the same idealist outlook has to assume a much more sophisticated form. The development of such a form is

the task first taken up by the Mahayana Buddhists. They have among them a number of highly skilled philosophers, who move forward to evolve all sorts of crafty considerations in favour of the idealist outlook. Moreover, as advanced philosophers they realise that the defence of idealism can be sound only on the strength of a number of other collateral positions in philosophy, some of which are at best hinted at by the Upanisadic idealists. With considerable philosophical ability the Mahayana Buddhists argue in favour of these positions and defend these in the later academic sense. As a result, philosophical idealism no longer remains with them in its originally rudimentary form. The Mahayanists give it the form of a formidable philosophy, notwithstanding the artificiality of the Buddhist flavour added to it and in spite of the sundry superstitions manufactured by them perhaps with the hope of adding a protective crust to the most extravagant form of world-denying enthusiasm.

Here is a brief account of the more outstanding Mahayana philosophers.

3. Madhyamaka Philosophy or Sunya-vada

The greatest name in the history of Mahayana is Nagarjuna, who belongs to the first-second century AD. Born in a Brahmin family in southern India, he is said to have extensively studied the Brahmanical scriptures in his early life. But he renounces Brahmanism in favour of Buddhism. We do not know the real cause of this, for his biographers have only weird tales to tell about it. The quaintest thing persistently told about him is the story of his discovery of the Mahayana scriptures. After getting converted to Buddhism, Nagarjuna extensively studies the then existing scriptures of the Buddhists and feels utterly dissatisfied with these. So he wanders about in the country, and comes across among the mythical creatures of the nether world—the *naga*-s or 'serpents' —the most important *Mahayana-sutra, Prajna-paramita,*

which at last satisfies his spiritual quest. Such a story is too thick to be seriously taken and the older or more orthodox Buddhists of his times bluntly said that the text is composed by Nagarjuna himself[1]—a suggestion which we cannot summarily dismiss. In any case, Nagarjuna must have been a very prolific writer. In the great Tibetan collection of the translations of the Indian Buddhist works, over 150 texts are attributed to him, though quite a large number of these bear the name of Nagarjuna on the title in order only to be passed as very authoritative.

Nagarjuna is usually mentioned along with his closest disciple, Aryadeva, his 'spiritual son'. Born in the royal family of Ceylon, Aryadeva, after accepting Buddhism, comes to India on a pilgrimage and becomes the foremost follower of Nagarjuna. Though not as prolific as the master, Aryadeva is a very fine writer. His most important work, written in four hundred verses, explains the philosophy of Nagarjuna and refutes for this purpose the other views then in circulation, inclusive of the views of the older Buddhists.

Nagarjuna himself refers to his philosophy as *madhyamaka-sastra*, the follower of which is hence called a Madhyamika. The name is taken from the ancient Buddhist expression *madhyama-pratipad*, which originally means 'the middle path' mainly in the ethical sense of not indulging in the extremes of either pleasure-seeking or asceticism. But Nagarjuna infuses into it a new and metaphisico-mystical meaning altogether. According to him, it is the view that reality defies the very possibility of theoretical characterisation in terms of any of the extremes, like 'it is' and 'it is not'. In simpler language, it means that reality is indescribable *(anirvacaniya)* and is hence open only to some mystical mode of apprehension—a point which the Upanisadic idealists already want to make, though in their own way.

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1. Chattopadhyaya (ed.) THBI 108.

The Upanisadic philosopher Yajnavalkya claims that any attempt to describe the ultimate reality as 'this' or 'that' is simply sinking into the depths of ignorance. The only legitimate way of referring to it is to use essentially negative expressions like 'it is not this' and it is not that' (*neti neti*). As he declares, "It is unseizable, for it is not seized; it is indestructible, for it is not destroyed; it is not attached, for it does not attach itself; it is unbounded; it does not tremble; it is not injured". Basically the same idea is expressed by Nagarjuna in his oft-quoted couplet referring to the ultimate reality, which roughly means: "It is not destroyed, not produced, not dissolved, not eternal, not one, not many, not inwardly moving, not outwardly moving." In short, none of our mundane modes of expression can refer to reality.

Thus the basic idea, that reality is indescribable and hence amenable at best only to some negative forms of referring to it, is inspired by the Upanisadic idealists. What is nevertheless strikingly new about Nagarjuna is the way in which he wants to demonstrate this. There are, he argues, only four alternative ways of referring to the things of the world. But none of these is tenable in the case of the ultimate reality. These alternatives are: (1) "It is, i.e. a thing exists", (2) "It is not, i.e. a thing does not exist", (3) "It both is and is not, i.e. a thing does exist as well as it does not exist", and (4) "It neither is nor is not, i.e. a thing neither exists nor non-exists". Nagarjuna takes these alternatives one by one and, with amazingly clever arguments, wants to show that each one of these is infested with an internal contradiction. We shall later see how exactly he tries to prove this. Assuming, however, the validity of his demonstration, it follows that none of these possibilities is permissible for referring to the ultimate reality, for ultimate reality is by nature free from any internal contradiction. What these refer to, therefore, are sheer appearances. The ultimate reality beyond the appearances can be open to some form of mystic apprehension only.

The other name of Nagarjuna's philosophy is Sunyavada, i.e. the theory *(vada)* of the void or nothingness *(sunya)*. It is frequently understood as some form of pure nihilism that denies reality whatsoever. But this is a misunderstanding. There is no doubt that the concept of the *sunya* or 'the void' (and of the abstract noun derived from it, namely *sunyata* or 'the voidity') has a decisive place in his philosophy. From his own point of view, however, it is a difficult concept liable to be easily misunderstood. As a matter of fact, the doctrine of the *sunya* means nothing else than the idea sought to be conveyed by him by the other name of his philosophy, namely *madhyamaka-sastra:* the Absolute or the ultimate reality is completely beyond the sham show of the material world or the world of sheer appearances and, therefore, from the point of view of our mundane expressions—which are expressions appropriate for the appearances alone—the ultimate reality is indescribable; it is open only to some form of supra-mundane or mystical apprehension.

The concept of the *sunya* or the void is, in an important sense, actually used by him from two different standpoints, viz of appearance and reality. From the standpoint of appearance, it means that everything in the material world is just void or nothingness. Nature, in other words, is nothing more than an empty phantom. At the same time, the ultimate reality or the Absolute is also referred to as *sunyata,* by which is technically meant that it is devoid of development and manifestation, manifoldness and diversity *(prapanca-sunya)*. Development and manifestation, manifoldness and diversity characterise the world of appearances only. Reality, viewed as completely devoid of these, is also understood as *sunyata.* This simply means that the Absolute or the ultimate reality is absolutely inexpressible in our mundane language. It is absolutely beyond all categories of our mundane thought. There can be no positive theory about it in the usual sense. To characterise this as pure nihilism, as a modern scholar aptly puts the point, is to confound the view ac-

cording to which there can be no theory of reality with the theory that there is no reality at all. Like his predecessor Yajnavalkya of the Upanisads, Nagarjuna subscribes to the former. It is not to be confounded with the latter. He fully believes in the existence of the Absolute or the ultimate reality; what he wants to emphasise is simply that this reality is beyond the categories of human thought. Though completely beyond the reach of ordinary thought, this reality is supposed to be apprehended by a mystical mode of awareness, which is called *prajna-paramita* or the transcendental highest wisdom. The attainment of this means the freedom from the fictitious material world and is hence called *nirvana* or salvation, the other term for which in Nagarjuna's philosophy is *sunyata* itself.

4. Yogacara Philosophy or Vijnana-vada

The Madhyamaka philosophy does not apparently have an immediate success. We do not hear much about it for a few centuries after Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. But the next step in the development of Indian idealism is taken up by another section of the Mahayana Buddhists, called the Yogacaras. Their view is variously referred to as Vijnana-vada, Vijnapti-matrata-vada and Niralambana-vada.

Yogacara literally means the practice of the *yoga;* those who practise *yoga* are the Yogacaras. But this does not give us much idea of the distinctive peculiarity of those Mahayana philosophers, for a large number of others in Indian philosophy believe in *yoga*—a belief which can be traced back to hoary antiquity. It seems, however, that the Yogacaras chose this name for themselves, because they wanted to lay an almost exclusive emphasis on *yoga*—on meditation and trance as the technique of cultivated withdrawal of consciousness from everything external to the purely internal—as the distinctive way of reaching philosophical wisdom. The other philosophers who also believe in *yoga* generally marvel more at the supernatural powers

imagined to result from these hoary and weird practices, not necessarily in the sense of dragging consciousness out of the fetters of the material bondage. In any case, the Yogacaras produce a very extensive literature on *yoga* in the sense of meditation and trance, describing how this helps one to be progressively liberated from the bonds of materiality, i.e. from the delusion of involvement in the fiction of the material world.[2]

But we have a better idea of their actual philosophical view from its name Vijnana-vada or Vijnapti-matrata-vada. The word *vijnana* or *vijnapti* means mind or consciousness, though not in the conventional sense of a spiritual substance. From the point of view of these Buddhists, mind means something like a stream *(santana)* of consciousness, or more simply, a stream of fleeting ideas. Vijnana-vada or Vijnapti-matrata-vada is the view that only the mind in this sense is real, or more simply, that the ideas and ideas alone are real. The main emphasis of such a philosophy is naturally on the denial of the material or extra-mental world. Ordinary people believe that there are such things as the houses, mountains, rivers, etc, of which we have ideas. According to these philosophers, however, only ideas exist; but there is no actual thing outside the minds to correspond to these ideas. Everything, in short, is purely mental.

The Indian way of putting this is that the ideas exist by themselves or by their own right, without—as ordinarily imagined—the need of any support of the material things.

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2. Vallee Poussion in ERE viii. 330n: in *Mahavastu* i.120. Yogacara simply means one who practises yoga in the sense of contemplation; *Abhidharma* (ch. vi) uses the name to refer to the ascetics who practise meditation on the horrible (*asuddha-bhavana* e.g.: contemplation on corpse). The most extensive Yogacara work on the subject is Asanga's *Yogacarabhumi*. For the metaphysical implications of yoga methodology, see Stcherbatsky (tr.) Maitreya's *MV* 14-5 & notes 27-8. Cf. Chattopadhyaya (ed.) THBI 156ff for Mahayana legends about Asanga's yoga meditation.

The view is thus also referred to as Niralambana-vada, literally the theory according to which ideas do not have any support in the material things, or more simply, that there is nothing material to correspond to the ideas. One has, for example, the idea of the 'blue'; but this is an idea pure and simple and there is nothing called actually 'blue' in the external world which corresponds to the idea. The main emphasis of the philosophy being thus the denial of the external or material objects, it is also called *bahya-artha-nirodha-vada* or the theory that denies the existence of the external or material objects.

Vijnana-vada is, at least to a large extent, the Indian counterpart of the philosophy of Bishop Berkeley. One of the main arguments offered by its advanced representatives is exactly the same on the strength of which Berkeley also wants to prove his idealism. This argument—called the *sahopalambha-niyama* in Indian terminology—is that one can never jump out of the circle of one's own ideas and reach the object directly. Hence what one knows is invariably only one's ideas and never the things outside the mind. Where the Vijnana-vadins differ from Berkeley, however, is that they want to carry the implications of the view to their logical culmination. If ideas and ideas alone are real, the material world is to be viewed as completely unreal, or simply as the figments of imagination. This, as Berkeley says, is taking "a chimerical view of things", and he wants to evade such a raw consequence of his own philosophy. But the Vijnana-vadins do not bother. They want instead to draw the full implications of their own philosophy and argue with enthusiasm that since ideas alone are real, the material world as ordinarily experienced is completely unreal or illusory.

We have in this one of the characteristic peculiarities of Indian idealists. The material world, they argue, is completely unreal. Yet the fact is that people experience it. How then is this fact of experience to be explained? The idealists answer that this is easily explained in terms of the patent hallucinations and sense-illusions, like seeing

snake in a rope, water in a mirage and silver in a shining piece of shell.

The other way suggested for understanding the nature of our experience of the physical objects is to interpret these in terms of the dream-experience. The objects dreamt of are patently the products of the mind, ideas pure and simple, though while dreaming one imagines these as existing in the material world outside the mind as it were. The mere experience of something as an objective or physical thing does not prove that it is actually so.

We shall later see these arguments in some details. For the present it is important for us to note that their basic suggestion is already contained in the Upanisads. Yajnavalkya, for example, tries to prove the unreality of the material world with the argument that the objects experienced in dreams are mere products of the soul or self—are 'projected' by it. As he puts it, "When a person goes to sleep, he takes along the material of this all-containing world, himself tears it apart, himself builds it up, and dreams by his own brightness, by his own light... There are no chariots there, no spans, no roads. But he projects from himself chariots, spans, roads. There are no blisses there, no pleasures, no delights. But he projects from himself blisses, pleasures, delights. There are no tanks there, no lotus-pools, no streams. But he projects from himself tanks, lotus-pools, streams. For he is a creator."

Compared to the arguments of the later Vijnana-vadins, this is perhaps a crude way of putting the point. But the point is already there in the Upanisad and it is but one step further to turn it into a secure epistemological foundation for the idealist outlook. If dreams are evidences of our general capacity to create—or 'project'—the objects experienced, it has at any rate to be admitted that we have the capacity of manufacturing the objects of experience. Hence there is nothing to prevent the supposition that we are doing the same even during our socalled normal waking experiences. This is what the Vijnana-vadin argues. However what prevents him from acknowledging his honest

indebtedness to the Upanisadic suggestion is his own sense of sectarianism. How can he, as a pious Buddhist, have anything to do with the texts considered scriptural by the 'aliens' or *tirthika*-s?

Also interesting is the way in which the Vijnana-vadin wants to make his own difference with the Sunya-vadin look momentous. The main point of this difference is alleged to be that while according to the former the Mind, as the undifferentiated pure consciousness *(advaya-laksanam vijnapti-matram)* is real—and that it is known as the self-revealing Absolute with the removal by the yogic meditation of the obscurations or obstructions to its knowledge —the Sunya-vadin denies all reality whatsoever. However in order to inflate the importance of his own difference with the Sunya-vadin, the Vijnana-vadin in fact attributes to the former a position much more negativistic than it actually is.[3] The polemical fervour of the Sunya-vadin is designed to demolish all vestiges of reality of the material world no doubt. But this is done to safeguard the exclusive reality of the Absolute beyond, which, according to the Sunya-vadin, is apprehended only mystically. This is substantially the position also of the Vijnana-vadin, whose only difference with the sunya-vadin is that he wants to characterise the Absolute positively as the Mind or pure consciousness, while the Sunya-vadin refuses the possibility of any such positive characterisation of the nature of the Absolute, leaving its essential spirituality to be realised in *nirvana*. It will be wrong to think that there is no difference at all between Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada. Nevertheless this difference is not so fundamental as it is sometimes made to appear. It is simply a difference of emphasis within the general framework of the fundamentals of Indian idealism. From the standpoint of the antithesis of idealism at any rate, the distinction between Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada is somewhat immaterial. This is already pointed out

3. Stcherbatsky (tr.) *MV* 41n.

by Kumarila, an outstanding opponent of Indian idealism. He introduces his refutation of idealism with the following remarks: "The Yogacaras hold that Ideas are without corresponding realities (in the external world); and those who hold the Madhyamika doctrine deny the reality of the Idea also. In both these theories, however, the denial of the external object is common *(tatra bahyarthasunyatvam tulyam tavad dvyorapi)*."[4] On account of this denial of the reality of the external objects being common to both, Kumarila himself, following his predecessors, wants to refute idealism in both forms mainly by proving the reality of the external material objects. But more of this later.

5. Origin of Vijnana-vada

It is difficult for us today to be exact about the origin of Vijnana-vada. One of the 'scriptural texts' concocted by the Mahayanists, the *Lankavatara-sutra,* shows a distinct preference for this view. Interestingly, the passages that are philosophically more prominent in this are clearly reminiscent of the Upanisads. The Tibetan historian Taranatha[5], to whom we are obliged for much of the information about the Mahayana philosophers, quotes the authority of a lost Indian text that mentions "three early Yogacaras", called Nanda, Paramasena and Samyaksatya. They are said to be the contemporaries of Nagarjuna. Though no work by any of them survives even in Tibetan translation, the presumption is that the philosophical tendency they represent is quite old—perhaps as old as Sunya-vada.

Even assuming this we have to admit that the idealistic outlook in this form has to wait for a few centuries more to have outstanding philosophers to defend it. Round about the fifth century AD—during what is often called 'the golden age of the Guptas'—appear two extremely influential thinkers who give the first philosophically important shape to it. They are Asanga and his half-brother (i.e.

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4. Kumarila *SV niralambana-vada* 14-6.
5. Chattopadhyaya (ed.) THBI 106.

brother born of the same mother but different father) Vasubandhu. Asanga himself claims that he was directly inspired by Maitreyanatha, whose personality belongs to the border region of myth and reality, though some of the works attributed to him survive in Tibetan translation.

Asanga and Vasubandhu originally belonged to Purusapura (Peshawar) in Gandhara (Kandahar). But the main scene of Asanga's activities was Ayodhya (Oudh), though, according to Taranatha, he spent about twelve years in the Nalanda monastery and passed away at Rajagrha (Bihar). The scene of the earlier career of Vasubandhu was Kashmir, when he was still a follower of the older and orthodox form of Buddhism, called Vaibhasika. As a matter of fact, the extant basic work of the Vaibhasikas was written by him. It is generally said that he was later converted into a follower of Vijnana-vada under the influence of his elder brother Asanga, who brought him to Ayodhya. According to Taranatha, he acted for a considerable period as the head of the Nalanda monastery and died as a disillusioned person somewhere in Nepal.[6]

6. Further Development of Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada

After Asanga and Vasubandhu, the development of Indian idealism proceeds in two very close but somewhat parallel lines—those of Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada.

Sunya-vada is taken up or revived after Nagarjuna and Aryadeva by two powerful south Indian philosophers of the sixth century AD. They were Buddhapalita and Bhavya (or Bhavaviveka). As already mentioned, the two sharply differ on the question of methodology. For the purpose of demonstrating the total unreality of the material world, Buddhapalita wants to depend exclusively on the negative dialectic of Nagarjuna, technically called *prasanga* in Indian philosophy. This is the technique intended to demonstrate that any tendency to attribute reality to the

6. *Ib.* 155.

material world is infested with an irreconcilable internal contradiction. But Bhavya wants to supplement this technique with independent (*svatantra*) logical considerations, which, he thinks, have intrinsic efficacy of their own, though for the purpose of pointing precisely to the same conclusion, namely the utter nothingness of the material world. This, argues Buddhapalita, is absolutely impermissible, inasmuch as the extreme idealism of Nagarjuna is totally incompatible even with the least concession to the validity of logic. But more of logic and idealism later.

Shortly after these two, another south Indian philosopher, Candrakirti (c 6th-7th century AD), followed Buddhapalita's methodology in defence of Sunya-vada, claiming to silence once for all the interpretation of this philosophy by Bhavya. In this connection, he indulges in a great deal of polemics against the validity of logic as such, inclusive of the neo-logic meanwhile evolved by a section of the later Buddhists, about which we shall presently see. He also shows the zeal of refuting Vijnana-vada in favour of Sunya-vada and even wants to give us the impression that the difference between the two is fundamental.

Candrakirti's line of thought is soon taken up by Santideva (c 7th century AD), who is perhaps connected with the ruling family of Saurastra. Santideva is usually considered by the eminent authorities on Mahayana as the last great representative of Sunya-vada in its purity and there is no end to the gossip about his miraculous powers in the circle of the Mahayanists. What is indisputable about him, however, is an excellent poetical gift. He preaches the theory of the utter nothingness of the material world in the form of the most fascinating poetry. This poetry is indeed so beautiful that it can easily prevent people from seeing how ugly, from the point of view of the positive sciences, are the ideas he preaches.

On the Vijnana-vada side, Vasubandhu is soon followed by a number of very illustrious pupils, among whom the most prominent are Sthiramati and Dignaga. Of them, Sthiramati is the elder and the main scenes of his activities

are Surat (Valabhi) and Nalanda. He is primarily interested in metaphysics and some of his commentaries on the more classical works of Vijnana-vada are outstanding Dignaga is born in a Brahmin family of south India though —we do not really know why—he appears to choose Orissa as the main scene of his activities. Though extremely keen on defending the metaphysical position of Vijnana-vada, he becomes somehow or other primarily interested in the problems of epistemology and logic.

Thus, he writes a famous work called 'the critical examination of the material objects alleged to correspond to ideas' *(Alambana-pariksa)*, in which he wants to prove that the admission of such objects is philosophically untenable. The main theme of the book is the refutation of atomism—a theme on which his master Vasubandhu had already written. The choice of the theme is evidently based on the assumption that atomism being the most advanced form of the theory of the nature of matter, the refutation of atomism means the demolition of the concept of matter as such. The concept of matter thus eliminated from philosophy, Dignaga—like Vasubandhu—feels safe about his commitment to the view that ideas and ideas alone are real. This is mainly the way in which he defends subjective idealism.

Dignaga is more famous in the history of Indian philosophy as the founder of what the modern scholars generally call 'the Buddhist Logic'. Such a description of the system of reformed logic of Dignaga is questionable, because beyond the bare fact of Dignaga being a Buddhist by creed there is practically nothing in his logic that is specifically Buddhistic. Really speaking, it rather means, a new system of logic and epistemology, which hopes to reform the older Indian logic associated with the names of Gotama and Vatsyayana.

Dignaga's logic receives its best expression in the writings of his commentator Dharmakirti, who also originally belongs to south India and who is a direct disciple of a disciple of Dignaga. By metaphysical conviction, Dharmakirti also professes to be a follower of Vijnana-vada. Like

Vasubandhu and Dignaga before him, Dharmakirti also tries his very best to refute the theory of the atoms, hoping thereby to demolish the concept of matter as such. But his more important contribution to Indian idealism is to be found elsewhere. He appears to be the first to evolve the argument technically known in Indian philosophy as the *sahopalambha-niyama*, which, as we have just said, is the exact Indian counterpart of Berkeley's main argument in defence of idealism.

Notwithstanding all this, Dharmakirti is remembered today primarily for his contributions to the problems of Indian logic and epistemology. Because of this, he is considered by some of the modern scholars as by far the greatest philosopher of the country. He is followed by a long list of illustrious logicians, who write their works mainly in the form of commentaries and commentaries upon commentaries. But they also gradually start to differ among themselves, though mainly on the more formal questions concerning logic and epistemology, maintaining at the same time a basic affiliation to the metaphysics of Vijnana-vada. Without underestimating the importance of their contribution to Indian logic, we have to see whether they at all succeeded in resolving the flat contradiction between their idealist preoccupation and the genuine enthusiasm for logic—a contradiction on which Nagarjuna, Buddhapalita and Candrakirti put so much of emphasis.

Though the followers of Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada are themselves inclined to inflate their mutual differences, philosophically speaking these are not really fundamental. The main purpose of both these varieties of idealism is to explain away the reality of the material world as some kind of an illusion conjured up by our own or subjective defect. Only thus they hope to make room for the exclusive reality of the spirit beyond, the mystical realisation of the nature of which means for both the Sunya-vadins and Vijnana-vadins liberation or *nirvana*.

Besides the philosophers representing both the trends fully agree on drawing an important distinction, on which

philosophical idealism wants always to thrive. It is the distinction between 'the socalled truth from the standpoint of our practical life' and 'the ultimate truth from the standpoint of the highest philosophical wisdom'. This leads the representatives of both Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada to offer their famous theory of 'the two truths', which they call the *samvrti-satya* and *paramartha-satya*. The former means truth from the barely empirical or practical point of view and the latter the ultimate or the metaphysical truth. They argue that they have no anxiety to deny the former, though as philosophers they have also the responsibility of pointing out that what is true from the strictly limited standpoint of our everyday existence cannot stand the test of the ultimate philosophical scrutiny and as such is not to be confused with truth in the philosophical sense proper.

In view of all these basic agreements, the controversies between the representatives of these two forms of idealism are often of the nature of an 'exercise in mock-combat'. After the stalwarts of both the camps apparently exhaust their energies in this, a stage is perhaps reached when the basic agreement between Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada can be honestly emphasised and their apparent differences pushed to the background. This is actually done in the 8th century AD by Santaraksita and his disciple-commentator Kamalasila, who are accordingly mentioned as representing the synthesis of the Madhyamaka and Yogacara philosophies. Interestingly, with the achievement of this synthesis, Santaraksita also feels that there is actually not much of real philosophical ground for the Mahayana Buddhists to quarrel with the followers of the Upanisadic idealism, inasmuch as they also reject the reality of the material world in favour of the exclusive reality of the pure spirit or consciousness. The only defect in their view, according to him, is that they consider this consciousness as eternal, but this defect is only a minor one. Referring to the followers of the Upanisadic idealism, he says, "Others assert that the earth,

fire, water, etc. are the illusory manifestations of eternal consciousness, and this is what constitutes the soul... Their error (namely that of viewing consciousness as one and eternal) is only a minor one (*tesam alpaparadham*)".[7] But why is their error just a minor one? Kamalasila explains that this is so, because the truth in their view is much more significant and that is the insistence on the exclusive reality of pure consciousness.

Santaraksita belongs presumably to Bengal, though, after effecting this consolidation in the idealistic outlook, he goes to Tibet, where he is soon followed by Kamalasila. They do the real pioneering work for the spread of Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet, as a result of which it becomes the state ideology there and continues to be so even up to recent times. But this is another story, into which we need not digress.

7. Advaita Vedanta

With the assertion of the fundamental unity between Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada and the consequent admission that the essence of this synthesis differs only insignificantly with Upanisadic idealism, the development of idealism among the Mahayana Buddhists themselves reaches its philosophical terminus. After this their philosophical interest perceptibly declines and they gradually drift to the exploration of easy shortcuts to the attainment of miraculous powers as well as emancipation. This, they think, can be attained mainly by certain age-old spells and rituals, the body of which is often referred to by the broad name Tantrism. They also indulge in elaborate ceremonials to worship and magically control all sorts of deities, ghosts and hobgoblins indiscriminately taken up from the popular beliefs outside Buddhism to ensure the material prosperity of their patrons. The development of these tendencies in the course of a few more centuries

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7. Santaraksita *TS* 330-1.

leaves Buddhism with no ideological justification for its independent existence and its internal decay becomes so complete that by roughly the 11th-12th centuries AD external factors of secondary importance prove enough to make it virtually extinct in the Indian soil.

But this does not mean the end of the career of Indian idealism. After the philosophical consolidation of Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada, the stage is reached for the return of Indian idealism to its original source, the Upanisads, though with all the philosophical grandeur meanwhile added to it by the Mahayana Buddhists. This starts taking shape roughly from the 8th century AD and assumes the form of the Advaita Vedanta, which means the Upanisadic philosophy (*vedanta*) of absolute non-dualism (*advaita*). As Stcherbatsky[8] very aptly puts it, "we see in the next period the old Vedanta remodelled and equipped with fresh arguments by an adaptation to it of the methods elaborated in the Vijnana-vada and Sunya-vada schools of Buddhism".

For the right understanding of the Advaita Vedanta, therefore, it is first of all necessary to be clear about its dual affiliation.

There is already a tendency in Indian tradition, highlighted particularly by another section of the orthodox followers of the Upanisads, to brand the Advaita Vedanta as but Buddhism in disguise. The main point of this is designed to score an easy victory over the Advaita Vedanta by mobilising mainly the sectarian sentiments against it. If the Advaita Vedantist is simply a crypto-Buddhist, he is, from the standpoint of the Upanisadic orthodoxy, only a heretic masquerading faith in the Upanisads. Such a criticism is certainly wrong, for notwithstanding everything that it borrows from Mahayana Buddhism, Advaita Vedanta is also firmly rooted in the Upanisads. As a matter of fact, the greatest representative of Advaita Vedanta, Samkara, wants to prove this not only by extensively

8. Stcherbatsky CBN 102.

quoting passages from the Upanisads supporting his philosophy but also by preparing commentaries on all the major Upanisads, in which the texts were made to support Advaita Vedanta. His claim that Advaita Vedanta is the only philosophy contained in the Upanisads is of course an exaggeration, but no less so is the counterclaim that he is simply a pseudo-Buddhist having nothing to do with the Upanisads.

Yet the description of Advaita Vedanta as but Buddhism in disguise is not without genuine significance. With all its moorings in the Upanisads, it is surely not a mere repetition of the Upanisadic idealism. Philosophical idealism remains in the Upanisads in an extremely rudimentary and naive form. The Mahayana Buddhists are historically the first to add to it all sorts of major philosophical considerations and thus raise it to the status of a very powerful philosophy in the later sense. The Advaita Vedantists borrow all these from the Mahayana Buddhists, though with some terminological reshuffling and occasional shift of emphasis. From this point of view, the description of Advaita Vedanta as but Mahayana idealism in a new form has indeed a great deal of significance.

The Advaita Vedantists have thus a dual affiliation—to Upanisadic idealism as well as Mahayana Buddhism. But how can such a dual affiliation be at all possible? The answer is simple. The idealistic outlook of the Mahayana Buddhists is not really repugnant to the main spirit of Upanisadic idealism. Both Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada draw their philosophical fundamentals from the idealistic outlook as originally foreshadowed in the Upanisads. It is nothing but sectarianism that prevents the Mahayana Buddhists to acknowledge this frankly, just as it is only the counter-sectarianism particularly of Samkara and a large number of the followers of Advaita Vedanta that prevents them from acknowledging their own indebtedness to Mahayana Buddhists.

Interestingly, this sectarianism is not always equally intense. We have just seen how among the Mahayana

Buddhists it is already on the decline in the case of Santaraksita, who realises that the actual philosophical difference between Mahayana idealism and Upanisadic idealism is after all a matter of minor importance and, compared to it, what unites the two is much more important. The same is realised by Gaudapada, who is the first real representative of Advaita Vedanta and who, belonging as he does to the 8th century AD, is roughly a contemporary of Santaraksita. Just as the last really great representative of Mahayana idealism feels his philosophical nearness with the Upanisadic idealists, so also does the first real representative of Advaita Vedanta feel his philosophical affinity with the Mahayana idealists. As S. N. Dasgupta[9] boldly sums up his observations on Gaudapada's views:

It is so obvious that these doctrines are borrowed from the Madhyamika doctrines, as found in Nagarjuna's *karika*-s, and the Vijnana-vada doctrines, as found in the *Lankavatara*, that it is needless to attempt to prove it. Gaudapada assimilated all the Buddhist Sunya-vada and Vijnana-vada teachings, and thought that these held good of the ultimate truth preached by the Upanisads. It is immaterial whether he was a Hindu or a Buddhist, so long as we are sure that he had the highest respect for the Buddha and for the teachings which he believed to be his. Gaudapada took the smallest Upanisad to comment upon, probably because he wished to give his opinions unrestricted by the textual limitations of the bigger ones. His main emphasis is on the truth that he realized to be perfect. He only incidentally suggested that the great Buddhist truth of indefinable and unspeakable *vijnana* or vacuity would hold good of the highest *atman* of the Upanisads, and thus laid the foundation of a revival of the Upanisad studies on Buddhist lines. How far the Upanisads guaranteed in detail the truth of Gaudapada's views it was left for his disciple, the great Samkara, to examine and explain.

In the subsequent history of Indian idealism, Advaita Vedanta becomes the most dominant philosophy, largely

9. Dasgupta i.429.

because of the marked decline of interest in philosophy proper among the Mahayana Buddhists after Santaraksita. The great prestige of Advaita Vedanta in later history of Indian philosophy is associated with the activities of Samkara, who is either a direct disciple of Gaudapada or a disciple of his disciple. Born in a village in Kerala, he extensively travels in India and founds four monastic establishments in four corners of the country, the heads of which still bear the general title Samkara-acarya. In founding these monasteries, Samkara follows the organisational principles of the famous Buddhist monasteries, which have provisions for wholetime religious and philosophical propagandists. In the context of his own times, the establishment of these monasteries is surely an evidence of his exceptional organisational abilities, inclusive of his ability of mobilising huge financial support for the purpose. Such organisational activities apart, his literary output is undoubtedly voluminous, just as the literary quality of his writings is exceptionally high. For sheer charm of lucid Sanskrit prose, none in Indian philosophy perhaps ever equals Samkara. And yet Samkara does not live a very long life. Born in AD 788, he dies at the age of only thirty-two. Judged by sheer personal gifts, therefore, this young philosopher has indeed a very imposing stature in the cultural history of the country.

What is really not so indisputable about him is his actual philosophical ability. Though he reinterprets Upanisadic idealism in a really advanced form, there is practically nothing worthwhile in this reinterpretation which is not borrowed from the Mahayana Buddhists. This fact of largescale borrowing is sought to be concealed by Samkara himself with the demonstration of a great deal of contempt for these. Buddhists, often accusing them of preaching precisely the same views which he himself wants to preach with great gusto. He contemptuously remarks that it is no use discussing philosophy with the representatives of Sunya-vada, for they do not believe in any source of valid knowledge and how can he discuss philosophy with

those who have no respect for logic! At the same time, the denial of the validity of any source of valid knowledge and of logic in general is one of the fundamental points of Samkara himself. He even opens his philosophical *magnum opus* with the declaration that all the *pramana*-s or sources of valid knowledge are quite useless from the standpoint of philosophical wisdom he himself represents. Again, he indignantly remarks that the Vijnana-vadins are as shameless as those that want to prove the barrenness of their own mothers, inasmuch as they subsist on food while denying at the same time the reality of food itself. From his own philosophical standpoint, however, the food that the philosophers eat—like everything else in the material world—is nothing but a phantom conjured up by mortal illusion. It has no more reality for him than for the Vijnana-vadin. All this cannot but be reminiscent of "the advice of the charlatan in Turgenev: denounce most of all those vices which you yourself possess". The usual defence of Samkara by his modern admirers is that he admits the truth or logic as well as of the material things from the standpoint of practical life; what he denies is only their truth from the transcendental standpoint. But this very distinction between two truths is an innovation of the Mahayana philosophers, from whom Samkara borrows it only with some terminological alteration.

It needs to be added, however, that a few centuries after Samkara the strong sectarian animosity against the Mahayana Buddhists gradually fades out among the followers of the Advaita Vedanta, when Sriharsa (c. 12th century AD), for example, revives and reinforces the negative dialectics of Nagarjuna for a better defence of Advaita philosophy, "acknowledging that there is but an insignificant divergence between his views and those of the Madhyamikas".[10]

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10. Sriharsa *KKK* (Chowkhamba) 19 & 29: "It would be impossible to deny the real significance of what the Madhyamikas say". Cf. Stcherbatsky BL i.22 & Mookherjee NNMRP i.59ff.

This fluctuation in sectarianism apart, the subsequent history of Advaita Vedanta consists mainly in carrying forward the basic suggestions of the Upanisadic idealists as enriched by the Mahayana Buddhists, particularly with the hope of working out in greater details the nature and mechanism of the subjective defect—called *maya* or *avidya* in Advaita Vedanta—which is alleged to delude people with the fictitious show of the material world, a world that is supposed to have reality purely from the restricted standpoint of practical life. While doing this, they develop certain subsects of Advaita philosophy about which they themselves talk a lot.

8. Summing-up

We may now sum up the career of Indian idealism. It is first foreshadowed in one trend of speculations recorded in the Upanisads, next taken up by the Sunya-vadins and Vijnana-vadins who profess to be the followers of the so-called Mahayana Buddhism, and it is finally reasserted by the Advaita Vedantists—also known as the Maya-vadins—who want to be recognised as the strict followers of the Upanisads alone, but who, in fact, do their best to enrich the Upanisadic idealism with everything added to it in the meantime by the Mahayana Buddhists.

This career of Indian idealism is somewhat obscured by the sectarian considerations of both the Mahayana Buddhists and Advaita Vedantists. Insofar as we can be consciously critical of the hangover of the sectarianism of traditional philosophers themselves, we may conveniently represent the career of Indian idealism with the help of the following table:

UPANISADS

Yajnavalkya, Sanatkumara, Prajapati, Indra, etc.

MAHAYANA

Madhyamaka	Yogacara
(*Sunya-vada*)	(*Vijnana-vada*)
Nagarjuna	Maitreyanatha
Aryadeva	Asanga
Buddhapalita	Vasubandhu
Candrakirti	Dignaga
Santideva	Dharmakirti

Santaraksita

Kamalasila

ADVAITA VEDANTA

Gaudapada

Samkara

Sriharsa

Chapter 3

THE CASE OF THE IDEALISTS

1. Preliminary Remarks

With this brief survey of the career of Indian idealism, we now pass on to see how its major representatives want to defend their case. For this, it is not necessary to compile here a list of all the arguments of all the idealists in Indian philosophy. What is relevant instead is to have some idea of the more typical of their arguments, i.e. those arguments in particular that are reiterated—though sometimes with terminological variation of secondary importance—by the important representatives of Indian idealism. It is on these that their philosophical position ultimately hinges. In view of the vast literature actually produced by the Indian idealists in which they want to explain their arguments at great length, it is also necessary to mention at the very beginning that we have the scope here to review even the more typical of their arguments only in bare outlines and skip over many a detail.

The first point to be noted about these arguments is that these are more negative than positive. This is primarily because what actually unites the idealists in Indian philosophy is itself an essentially negative attitude. It is, as Kumarila says, *bahyartha-sunyatva*: the unreality of the objects of knowledge.

This is the real pivot of idealism, throughout its Indian career. In the Upanisads, it is simply taken for granted when the earliest idealists declare that nothing but the soul—the mass of bare consciousness—is real. On the later idealists devolves the task of *proving* this and the ways in which they try to prove this vary mainly in

terminological appearances. To the Sunya-vadins everything in the material world is just void or nothingness —*sunya*. The Vijnana-vadins say that these are mere phantoms produced by our perverse imagination—by *kalpa* or *vikalpa*. The Advaita-vadins claim that these are mere creations of our ignorance—*avidya* or *maya*. Thus the terms they use do vary, but not the main point. The material world does not exist.

What then are the main ways in which they want to demonstrate this?

Kumarila[1] says that the idealists want to prove their case—i.e. to disprove the reality of the material things—mainly in two ways. First, by a direct examination of the nature of the things known (*arthasya pariksanat*). Secondly, on the basis of the sources of knowledge (*pramanam asritah*). In modern terminology, we may call these two types of arguments as ontological and epistemological respectively. Let us begin with a brief idea of the first.

2. Elimination of Matter

As for the first, the most prominent one is intended to prove the untenability of the concept of matter. The main purpose of this argument is quite simple. Once the concept of matter is successfully eliminated, there remains no philosophical justification for viewing the material things—or the material world as a whole—as real.

How then do the Indian idealists work for the elimination of matter? The procedure open for them is to reject and refute all the theories of the nature of matter they are aware of.

In Indian philosophy, we come across mainly three theories of the nature of matter. These are:

(1) The theory of the four elements or *bhuta*-s, namely earth, water, fire and air. This theory is specially associated with the Lokayatas.

(2) The theory of the *pradhana* or *prakrti*, by which is

1. Kumarila *SV niralambana-vada* 17.

meant primeval matter from which the whole universe —inclusive of matter in the form of the gross physical elements—evolves. This theory is characteristic of the Samkhya philosophers.

(3) The theory of the atoms or *paramanu*-s. A very large number of Indian philosophers subscribe to it, though among them the most prominent are the Nyaya-Vaisesikas.

As is only to be expected, all these theories are upheld by the opponents of Indian idealism. It will therefore be necessary for us to go into some details of these in the course of our discussion of the antithesis of Indian idealism. For the present the point is that the idealists, in their zeal to eliminate the concept of matter, find it necessary to refute and reject all these.

From this point of view, there is also a shift of emphasis in their writings. The theory of the four *bhuta*-s, having presumably been the earliest of the Indian theories of the nature of matter, is sought to be refuted particularly by the earlier Indian idealists. But this theory of the nature of matter is itself comparatively rudimentary, and in the more advanced period of Indian philosophical activity none is known to defend it with philosophical sophistication. As a result, the idealists' zeal to refute the theory of the *bhuta*-s eventually recedes to the background. But not so their zeal to refute the theory of the *pradhana,* and more particularly that of the *paramanu*-s or atoms.

Among the Indian theories of the nature of matter, that which bothers Samkara most is that of the *pradhana.* He dilates much on its refutation and even goes to the extent of viewing it as representing the position of his foremost philosophical opponent. As is the practice of Indian philosophers to illustrate their procedure with the analogy of popular techniques, Samkara claims that, by rejecting the theory of the *pradhana*, he virtually accomplishes the rejection of all other rival theories, just as in a wrestling contest one is declared winner

over all his rivals by defeating the most powerful among them all (*pradhana-malla-nivarhana-nyaya*).

An important reason for Samkara's concern for the theory of the *pradhana* is plainly sectarian. Much to his annoyance, he finds this theory quite popular even among many subscribing to his own orthodoxy. Therefore, whether Samkara is philosophically justified in concentrating his attack mainly on the theory of the *pradhana*, is a different question. Apparently, the advanced of the Mahayana idealists think otherwise. They are inclined to view the theory of the atoms or *paramanu*-s as representing their strongest philosophical opposition. The main reason that justifies their procedure is obvious. Among the Indian theories of the nature of matter, *paramanu-vada* or the theory of the atoms is not only the most advanced, it is moreover historically defended by a large number of the most outstanding Indian philosophers. The Mahayana idealists concentrate most on its refutation. As early an Indian idealist as Nagarjuna[2] finds it necessary to refute it. In his own writings, however, this looks rather casual. In the course of a few centuries the attitude of the Mahayana idealists perceptibly changes, and this as the logical consequence of the growing enrichment of atomism itself. The refutation of atomism is a prominent theme for idealism as presented by Vasubandhu. His disciple Dignaga writes a special treatise for the purpose. Dharmakirti and Santaraksita discuss atomism very elaborately, in the course of which both want to enrich the basic arguments of Vasubandhu and Dignaga with more details. As a consequence, in the maturest phase of Indian philosophical activity, the basic controversy between idealism and its antithesis largely assumes the form of the debate over atomism. It is because of this that Kumarila's commentator explains that by the ontological ground (*arthasya pariksanat*) of the idealists is simply meant their polemics against atomism.

2. Venkata Ramanan 214-5.

Whether this growing zeal of Indian idealists to refute atomism results in the situation they themselves desire, is a different question. The polemics of the idealists against atomism does not allow the atomists themselves to remain indifferent to the defence of atomism. In the course of this they are led to add to the progressive perfection of the theory of the atoms.

It needs to be mentioned here that the Indian atomists include some of the greatest philosophers of the country. The negative stimulus provided to them by the idealists in the form of their polemics against atomism results in the opposite of what the idealists desire. Instead of atomism being removed from the field of Indian philosophy, it actually gains a great deal of theoretical soundness and becomes in fact one of the richest funds of the positive scientific ideas in the cultural heritage of the country.

In this way the controversy over atomism becomes one of basic significance for the Indian philosophical tradition. It deserves some detailed discussion. But that is perhaps best done after the general review of the Indian antithesis of philosophical idealism, to which atomism belongs. So we propose to return to this controversy later.

3. Rejection of Reason and Experience

For the effective elimination of the reality of the material world, the other prominent technique of the Indian idealists is to denounce experience and reason.

We can perhaps best introduce this with the manifesto with which Samkara opens his philosophical *magnum opus*. One of its major points is the outright condemnation of experience and reason, or, to put it in the Indian way, with the condemnation of perception inference, and in fact everything that is ordinarily considered as a source of right knowledge. In Indian terminology, a source of right knowledge is a *pramana*, and, though the philosophers are not agreed as to their exact number, it is gener-

ally agreed that the most important of them is the direct experience of an object, *pratyaksa* or perception. As it is often said, perception is 'the eldest among the sources of right knowledge' (*pramana-jyestha*). Next in order of importance is inference or *anumana,* literally 'after-knowledge' : it is thus called, because inference is supposed to be based on some previous perception.

Samkara opens his *Sariraka-bhasya* with the declaration that the claim of all the sources of knowledge like perception, inference, etc. as giving us real knowledge has to be rejected outright, because we can use these as instruments of knowledge only so long as we are under the general spell of ignorance. But why is it so? Samkara says that the basic function of ignorance—as is evident from the patent cases like seeing a snake in a rope—is to 'superimpose' something on something else, or, in simpler language, falsely imagining something to be what it is actually not. Without such a 'superimposition' no source of knowledge can at all operate. The very precondition of all the alleged sources of knowledge is ignorance. Instead of giving real knowledge, all these socalled sources of knowledge keep one under the spell of ignorance.

But why perception, inference, etc. necessarily presuppose the 'superimposition' of something on something else? From the point of view of Samkara's fundamental philosophical position, this is not difficult to see. According to him, the soul in the sense of bare consciousness is the only reality. Anything else—or the quality of anything else—falsely attributed to it or 'superimposed' upon it, cannot but be the mark of ignorance. However, without such a 'superimposition' no organ of knowledge like perception, inference, etc. can at all function. When one perceives an object, one is obliged to believe that one's soul has a body endowed with the sense-organs. All these are material things. The very possibility of perception thus presupposes the 'superimposition' of the material on the purely spiritual—the false attribution to the soul, things and qualities totally alien to its real nature. Hence, argues

Samkara, all the socalled sources of knowledge like perception etc. are working under the general spell of ignorance. We may quote here a few lines from his writings to see how lucidly he puts the point:[3]

But how can the means of right knowledge such as perception, inference, etc., ... have for their object that which is dependent on ignorance? Because, we reply, the means of right knowledge cannot operate unless there be a knowing personality and because the existence of the latter depends upon the erroneous notion that the body, the senses, and so on, are identical with, or belong to, the self of the knowing person. For without the employment of the senses, perception and the other means of right knowledge cannot operate. And without a basis (i.e. the body), the senses cannot act. Nor does anybody act by means of a body on which the nature of the self is not superimposed. Nor can, in the absence of all that, the self, which, in its own nature, is free from all contact, become a knowing agent. And if there is no knowing agent, the means of right knowledge cannot operate (as already said). Hence, perception and the other means of right knowledge...have for their object that which is dependent on ignorance.

It is not difficult to see that the entire discussion hinges on one assumption: the self in its real sense can have nothing to do with anything material. Once this is assumed, all the organs of knowledge can be condemned as organs of mere deception. From the point of view of positive science all this is taking a dangerous attitude, for it is precisely on the strength of the sources of knowledge like perception and inference—experience and reason—that the positive sciences can understand and thereby master nature. But the idealist does not care: to him nature itself is an illusion, and hence anything that is supposed to give the knowledge of nature has to be condemned. The metaphysical commitment of the Indian idealist demands of him an open hostility to science, and hence also to the very organs of scientific knowledge. Only irrationalism, mysticism and obscurantism can offer him the shelter he needs.

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3. Samkara *adhyasa-bhasya.* Tr Thibaut.

What leads Samkara to open his philosophical work with a denunciation of the organs of knowledge is thus not difficult to see. However it is for him more of the nature of a declaration. He begins with the assumption that pure consciousness is the only reality, and, on the strength of this, argues that since the *pramana*-s can function only by falsely imputing to it material things like body and sense-organs, these *pramana*-s are by nature deceptive.

Though clearly indicative of the basic incompatibility of the idealist outlook with the admission of the normal sources of knowledge, this declaration of Samkara cannot be enough for the purpose of the idealist. Others among the Indian idealists evidently with greater philosophical acumen realise that it is no use condemning experience and reason on the strength of the idealist assumption; the point rather is to ensure the idealist assumption on the strength of the demonstration of the intrinsic invalidity of experience and reason. In other words, while Samkara argues that the rejection of reason and experience follows from the idealist outlook, some other Indian idealists can see that the idealist outlook can be established only by first *proving* the uselessness of these. It is one thing to say, as Samkara virtually does, that idealism wants the sources of knowledge declared invalid; but it is a different and much more difficult proposition to demonstrate that the sources of knowledge are actually so.

Among the Indian idealists, this comparatively difficult task is taken up particularly by philosophers like Nagarjuna, Buddhapalita, Candrakirti and Sriharsa. As a specimen of their arguments we may mention here Nagarjuna's[4] polemic against the *pramana*-s:

If things known are claimed to be proved by the well-recognised sources of knowledge like perception, inference, etc. the question will be obviously asked as to the validity of these. Without being themselves valid, perception, inference, etc. cannot prove that the things known by them are real or true, i.e. in the form in which these are perceived,

4. Nagarjuna *VV* 31-2. Free rendering. Cf. Mookherjee NNMRP i.21.

inferred, etc. Hence the question is: Are these sources of knowledge really valid? If no defence is offered for the validity of these, the original claim that things are proved by these will have to be abandoned. On the other hand, if one claims to prove the validity of these, such a claim can be based only on the evidence of some other knowledge—or some other factor—which is supposed to impart validity to these sources of knowledge. Let us take the case of perception. If one claims that perception has validity, one has to point to something else—or something other than perception itself—which makes perception valid or imparts validity to perception. But then this will immediately raise another question. It is the question concerning the validity of this factor which is supposed to make perception valid. Without being itself valid, nothing can impart validity to perception. If perception is claimed to be valid on the strength of say x, this x must itself be assumed as valid, without which it cannot impart validity to perception. If, however, x is assumed to be valid, the same question will arise with regard to x itself: What is it that makes x valid? One will thus be led to assume a second factor—say y—and the validity thereof. But how to account for the validity of this second factor, or of y itself? The only conceivable way of doing this is to point to a third factor—say z—which is supposed to impart validity to y. Evidently, this third factor—this z—must itself be assumed as valid, without which it cannot impart validity to y. But what possibly accounts for the validity of this third factor,—of this z itself? The only way to do it is to point to a fourth factor and the validity thereof. But what accounts for the validity of this fourth factor? And so on. The process of assuming one factor after another will go on endlessly, i.e. without enabling one to stop anywhere. Thus the attempt to prove the validity of the sources of knowledge leads one nowhere. This shows that the attempt itself is totally futile. How, then, the objects alleged to be proved on the strength of these sources of knowledge can at all be accepted as proved?

This is only one of the arguments with which Nagarjuna wants to prove that the *pramana*-s prove nothing, for nowhere can these obtain the credentials for the purpose. Candrakirti quotes the argument and claims that only after answering it can there be any talk of the *pramana*-s. He is convinced that the argument is absolutely unanswerable.

Nagarjuna himself feels that the basic theme of the argument—which he calls *pramana-vidhvamsana* or the 'demolition of all sources of knowledge'—is crucial for his idealism. Hence he returns to it again and again, trying to show that there are also other ways of proving it. He even goes to the extent of writing an entire book mainly on this.[5]

Nagarjuna thus makes it clear that it is important for the Indian idealists to disprove, once for all, all the pretentious claims of experience and reason to give any genuine knowledge. Others also see its importance in their own ways. Beginning from the times of the Upanisads up to that of Sriharsa, the last outstanding representative of Advaita Vedanta, practically all idealists thrive on this theme. The only notable exception is the case of some later Vijnana-vadins, who want to be enthusiastic about the *pramana*-s along with their commitment to idealism. We shall presently see the difficulty they face for the purpose.

Once the worth of experience and reason is curtly dismissed, what is the philosopher left with? There is only one answer and that is obscurantism. But the Indian idealists do not feel shy about it. They want to make this obscurantism the very basis of their philosophy, trying to ennoble it with high-sounding epithets, like *prajna-paramita* or 'the highest transcendental wisdom' and *aparoksa-anubhuti* or 'the direct realisation of the nature of the ultimate reality'. If it is not for the mortals to reach such great wisdom on their own resources, there is no cause for despair, for there are the scriptures or *sastra*-s and these are the repositories of great wisdom beyond the reach of normal experience and reason. Thus it is that the Indian idealists invariably plead for faith in the scriptures on *sastra*-s: the Sunya-vadins do it, no less than the Vijnana-vadins and Maya-vadins. If philosophy is ever made an open apology for faith, it is done by the Indian idealists. It is for us to see how in this we have the main clue to the social function of Indian idealism.

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5. *Vaidalya-sutra* & *prakarana*. *Tanjur* mdo xvii.3 & 8.

It would have obviously meant the end of philosophy in India, had this been the only trend of our thinkers. Fortunately it is not so. As already said, Indian philosophical activity draws its nourishment from the active clash of ideas. If therefore the idealists want to thrive on obscurantism and faith, the more consistent representatives of its antithesis feel equally obliged to thrive on its opposite.

We can now understand why, in the history of Indian philosophy, the basic struggle between idealism and its antithesis has also been the struggle of obscurantism *vs* rationalism, of the condemnation of reason and experience *vs* the defence of their validity—in short, of superstition *vs* science. Thus, it is not an accident that an idealist like Samkara finds it fit to open his philosophical *magnum opus* with the declaration of the outright rejection of the *pramana*-s, nor is it an accident that Vatsyayana, an outstanding opponent of idealism, sees the need to open his own philosophical masterpiece with a bold defence of the *pramana*-s.[6] The contrast between irrationalism and rationalism is very sharply brought out by these two philosophical manifestos. And behind the two lies the difference between idealism and its antithesis.

4. Idealism and Logic: A Clarification

Though Indian idealism, generally speaking, seeks its sanction from the outright condemnation of the *pramana*-s, a section of the later representatives of Vijnana-vada—apparently flouting the attitude of their own predecessors or the earlier Vijnana-vadins—somehow or other develop a keen interest in the problems of the *pramana*-s. They start writing serious works on this. The most prominent of them are Dignaga, Dharmakirti and their followers. They cannot do this without taking the *pramana*-s seriously. And the fact is that they attach great importance to these. As Dharmakirti opens one of his shorter works with

6. See *infra* Ch. 7, Sec. 8.

the assertion: "All successful human action presupposes right knowledge. Right knowledge is twofold, namely direct experience (*pratyaksa*) and inference (*anumana*)".[7] Thus these philosophers remain idealists, wanting to outgrow at the same time the anxiety of their fellow philosophers to condemn or reject the truth of experience and reason.

Are we then to amend the generalised claim that obscurantism is one of the main pillars of Indian idealism? We are going to argue that we need not do this, for the commitment to idealism on the part of these philosophers does not fully fit with their enthusiasm for logic.

To begin with, let us note the facts that are quite indisputable.

First, there is no doubt that Dignaga and Dharmakirti are fully committed to the general metaphysical position of Vijnana-vada, or the view that ideas and ideas alone are real. As a matter of fact, some of the most sophisticated arguments in defence of this view are evolved by them. Secondly, there is no doubt either that thev are among the most advanced of the Indian thinkers who discuss the problems of the *pramana*-s, admitting the validity of these. As it is rightly pointed out, they infuse Indian logic and epistemology with a new vitality and introduce certain reforms of far-reaching consequence into these.

However admitting both these facts, we are still left with an important question. How far their renewed interest in the *pramana*-s strictly agrees with their commitment to idealism? Are they logicians in the real capacity of being idealists? The question is too important to be overlooked, though for discussing it even in bare outlines we have to digress into some technical details of their writings.

To begin with, the actual interpreters of Dignaga and Dharmakirti see some difficulty about the question and none of them manages to claim straightway that the Mas-

7. Dharmakirti *NB* i.1-2.

ters write their works on the *pramana*-s with an exclusive commitment to idealism.

The most important interpreter of Dignaga is Jinendrabuddhi, without whose detailed commentary on the main work of Dignaga (*Pramana-samuccaya*), it would be practically incomprehensible for modern scholars. Jinendrabuddhi is placed in the 8th century AD. Most popular among the commentators of Dharmakirti[8] are Vinitadeva and Dharmottara. The special importance for us of Vinitadeva's commentary is its simplicity and literalism. He is primarily interested in explaining the plain meaning of what Dharmakirti says. Vinitadeva belongs to the 7th century AD. Dharmottara, who belongs roughly to the next century, is more scholastic. For understanding his commentary we have often to depend on a subcommentary written on it, called the *Nyayabindu-tika-tippani*—often referred to briefly as the *tippani*—by somebody whose name is controversial but who is probably a junior contemporary of Dharmottara.

These then are the interpreters of Dignaga and Dharmakirti, on whom we have to depend. It is therefore not of little interest to note that none of them finds it permissible to assert outright that the discussion of the *pramana*-s on the part of the Masters is fully consistent with their committed idealism.

Commenting on Dignaga, Jinendrabuddhi[9] observes, "Although convinced that there is no possibility of cognising the external object in its real sense (which, for the Vijnana-vadin, does not exist at all), Dignaga is desirous so to formulate his view of the problem of the resulting phase (in the process of cognition) that it should satisfy both the opponents of idealism who affirm the existence of the external world and the idealists who deny it." But why does Dignaga at all bother to satisfy also the opponents of idealism who affirm the reality of the external

8. i.e. of Dharmakirti's more popular work *Nyaya-bindu*.
9. See Stcherbatsky BL ii. 383.

world, when he is fully convinced that their philosophical position is utterly wrong and deserves only to be rejected? Apparently, Jinendrabuddhi says this because he finds some of the statements of Dignaga difficult to accept purely from the standpoint of the idealist. He feels that behind these statements there is some sort of a compromise with the opponent of idealism.

Interestingly, the same difficulty is felt by Vinitadeva, when he wants to be clear about the actual metaphysical position from which Dharmakirti writes on the *pramana*-s. He can see that this position is not that of the uncompromising idealist. So he says that Dharmakirti has the intention of explaining the views of both the Sautrantikas and Yogacaras. This cannot but appear strange to us, when we remember that Sautrantika is the name of an earlier form of Buddhist philosophy, whose firm commitment to the reality of the external world is obligatory for the Yogacaras or Vijnana-vadins to reject outright. Dharmottara makes no comment on this point, but his own commentator—the author of the *tippani*—comes out with the startling declaration that, though otherwise a famous follower of Vijnana-vada, Dharmakirti in fact writes the work on logic not from the viewpoint of the idealist but accepting for the purpose the standpoint of the Sautrantikas, i.e. admitting the reality of the external world.

We shall presently see these statements in some more details. But this much is already obvious that none of these interpreters claims that Dignaga and Dharmakirti write on the *pramana*-s from the standpoint of idealism pure and simple. The presumption is that they find some difficulty in reconciling the views of the Masters on the *pramana*-s to the position of the strict idealist.

One of these difficulties is quite obvious. While discussing valid knowledge, these logicians find it necessary to talk rather freely—or in a peculiarly matter-of-fact manner—also of the objects of right knowledge, while, from the standpoint of their own Vijnana-vada, only knowledge or idea (*vijnana*) is real, and therefore any talk of the

objects over and above is impermissible. As a specimen of this we may quote here a few lines from Dharmottara,[10] where he wants to explain the main purpose and subject-matter of Dharmakirti's logic:

Wishing to show that this (work called the *Nyayabindu* by Dharmakirti) deserves to be written, the author points to the importance of the subject-matter. Because, says he, all successful human action is preceded by right knowledge, therefore this right knowledge must be investigated, and with this aim the present treatise is undertaken...

Right knowledge is knowledge not contradicted by experience. In common life we likewise say that a man has spoken the truth when he makes us reach the object he has first pointed out. Similarly we can also say that knowledge is right when it makes us reach an object it did point to. But by 'making us reach an object' nothing else is meant than the fact of turning our attention straight to the object. Indeed, knowledge does not create the object and does not offer it to us, but in turning our attention straight to the object, it *eo ipso* makes us reach it. Again, 'to turn a man straight to the object' is nothing else than to point it out as an aim of a possible purposive action. Indeed, one should not imagine that knowledge has the power forcibly to incite a man against his will. For this very reason, the ultimate result of an act of cognising is simply a distinct cognition. When an object has been cognised, man has been *eo ipso* turned towards it and the object reached... Turning now to the different modes of cognition, we see that when an object has been apprehended by direct experience, it has been converted into an object of possible purposive action through sense-perception... Therefore we say that an object has been pointed out by sense-perception, when it is cognised as something directly perceived. Inference or indirect cognition differs in that it points out the mark of the object, and by thus indirectly making sure its existence submits it as an object of possible purposive action. Thus it is that sense-perception points out a definite object, which appears before us directly, and inference likewise points out a definite object by way of the mark it is connected with. These two methods of cognising point out definite objects, therefore they are right knowledge. What differs from them is not right knowledge. Knowledge is right

10. See *Ib.* ii. 1-11.

when it makes us reach the object, and it makes us reach it when it has pointed to an attainable object. But an object pointed out in some different way, not according to the above mentioned two methods of right knowledge, is either absolutely unreal, as, e.g., water seen as a vision in a desert—it does not exist, it cannot be reached—or it is uncertain as to whether it exists or not as, e.g., every problematic object. Since there is no such object in the world, which at the same time would be existent and non-existent, therefore such a problematic object can never be attained...

Sentient beings strive for desired ends. They want that knowledge which leads them to the attainment of objects fitted for successful action. The knowledge that is investigated by the theory of cognition is just the knowledge they want. Therefore right knowledge is knowledge which points to reality, a reality which is capable of experiencing purposive action. And that object alone which has been pointed out by such right knowledge can be 'reached', i.e. clearly and distinctly cognised, because, as we have stated above, we understand by 'reaching' an object its definite cognition...

Human action has an aim. That which is aimed at is an object, i.e. that which is desired. There are objects to be avoided and objects to be attained... There is no other class of objects different from these two... Success is the actual attaining or avoiding of the object. When success is achieved by causes, it is called production. But when it is achieved by knowledge it is called behaviour (*anusthana*). It consists in avoiding the avoidable and attaining the attainable. Behaviour consisting of such activity is called successful action.

This passage is quoted at some length because—as understood by one of his ablest commentators—it can as well be taken as the manifesto of Dharmakirti's logic. Yet there is no denying that for us the whole thing makes rather strange reading. The reason for this is not what is said in the passage itself or its inherent cogency. It appears strange because it is supposed to express the basic attitude in epistemology of a philosopher who is convinced that ideas and ideas alone are real and who, therefore, takes the greatest pain to prove that there is no sense in talking

of any object corresponding to or 'supporting' (*alambana*) the ideas. On the contrary, the rather free mention of the 'object' in its commonsense use—and, more particularly, the claim that right knowledge alone is conducive to successful human action—cannot but be strongly reminiscent of the manifesto with which Vatsyayana, the pronounced opponent of idealism, opens his own logic. In other words, most of the things that Dharmottara says for explaining the main point of Dharmakirti's logic can easily fit with the basic attitude of the opponent of Vijnana-vada. But can these at all fit with Dharmakirti's own Vijnana-vada?

The main question in this context is: What does Dharmakirti mean by the 'object' of right knowledge? Since metaphysically speaking, he admits the reality of the ideas and ideas alone, can it be that by the 'objects' he means nothing but bare ideas? In the context of his logic at any rate, it is difficult to think so, for—other reasons apart—it is well-known that ideas, in the capacity of bare ideas, cannot account for successful human activities. On the contrary, what he says in logic makes sense only when 'object' is taken in its conventional meaning of external things. But this, as an exponent of Vijnana-vada, is precisely what he is supposed to deny. There is thus no doubt that in his logic Dharmakirti is making statements that are apparently peculiar for a strict Vijnana-vadin. He says, *arthakriya-samarthya-laksanatvad vastunah*: a real thing (*vastu* : physical thing?) is that which is characterised by the capacity of producing practical success.[11]

What does Dharmakirti mean by this? What, in particular, does he mean by 'object', when as a Vijnana-vadin he is convinced that only knowledge or idea is real? Dharmakirti comes out with a remarkable answer to this. "How knowledge", he says, "which is the sole existing reality, can appear in the form of objects, even I do not know... Just as people, under the spell of magic, see pieces of mud etc. not in their own form but in certain other forms, so

11. Dharmakirti *NB* i.14.

does knowledge appear there not in its own form but in the form of objects."[12] This is a way of saving idealism no doubt, and, as we shall see, it is perhaps the way in which Dignaga also wants to save idealism. But the consequence of this for logic is disastrous. It means that as a consistent idealist he cannot really speak of objects over and above bare knowledge, which, for the purposes of logic, he is obliged to do. When he is doing this, he is acting like one under the general spell of magical illusion—deluded by the appearance of objects where there are actually none. The discussions of the *pramana*-s, in other words, are discussions only within the general framework of illusion. This is the position of the Sunya-vadins, Maya-vadins and early Vijnana-vadins. And if this is also the real position of Dignaga and Dharmakirti, what after all does their enthusiasm for discussing right knowledge of objects really mean? Apparently it is not easy to reconcile logic with idealim and Dharmakirti perhaps feels that the easiest way to proceed in logic is to feign indifference to the problem of such reconciliation. Thus he declares, "Closing, like elephants, our eyes to the real situation, we proceed like ordinary people to consider the nature of objects."[13] This, it is not difficult to see, is more of the nature of the admission of a crisis than a resolution of it.

The crisis is most sharply felt in the understanding of direct experience or perception as a *pramana*. For the genuine opponents of idealism there is no difficulty about it. They define it as knowledge resulting from the contact of the sense-organ with the external object. But Dignaga cannot accept this, because of its immediate commitment to the reality of the external object. So he proposes an alternative—and essentially negative—definition of perception. It is knowledge fully free from *kalpana*, meaning imagination or 'conceptual construction'. This means that perception is something like bare sensation or pure sensation—the unique direct experience in its utter simplicity

12. Dharmakirti *PV* iii.353-5.

13. *Ib.* iii.220.

—without yet being qualified by name, class, etc., and without the possibility of being communicated or expressed in language. The bare awareness of a patch of colour—which, far from being understood as a coloured thing, is not even interpreted in terms of colour itself—is something at least very near to perception, as he wants it to be understood. Others in Indian philosophy call such perception 'indeterminate' (*nirvikalpaka*), admitting at the same time another variety of perception, called 'determinate' (*savikalpaka*), which is sensation already interpreted in terms of name, class, etc.—the perception, e.g., of a brown cow or a green tree. The main emphasis of Dignaga's definition of perception is thus to exclude from it determinate perception, which, being largely the product of 'conceptual construction' of *Kalpana*, is not perception at all.

We need not digress here to discuss the desirability or otherwise of admitting determinate perception as a valid form thereof. What immediately concerns us is another problem. Even with his revised definition of perception, Dignaga leaves unanswered a very important problem about it. There are patent cases of hallucination and sense-illusion caused by morbid conditions and many other factors, which have all the directness or 'freedom from conceptual construction' but which nevertheless are to be excluded from the understanding of right perception. The snake wrongly perceived in a rope is the result of 'conceptual construction'—the bare sensation of something longish interpreted as a snake. But the hallucinations are not so, nor are the sense-illusions caused by morbid vision etc. In hallucinations and dreams, "visions are present with all that vividness which is the characteristic feature of direct sense-perception. They lack the vagueness and generality which is the characteristic feature of conceptual thought. They cannot be understood as a misrepresentation by the intellect of one thing for the other".[14] So are the cases of

14. Stcherbatsky BL i.159.

sense-illusions of seeing double, because of visual disorder. There is nothing of the nature of 'construction' about these.

The definition of perception simply as knowledge free from construction does not automatically exclude such cases of hallucinations and sense-illusions. But without excluding these, Dignaga's definition of perception runs the risk of admitting that even hallucinations and illusions caused by morbid conditions are to be considered as right perceptions. How then can one define perception and exclude from it hallucinations and illusions?

The simplest way of doing it is of course to include in the definition of perception the further characteristic of *abhranta* or 'non-illusory'. But Dignaga himself cannot afford to do this, because, as he rightly feels, that is fatal for Vijnana-vada. As Vacaspati Misra, one of the most eminent opponents of idealism, aptly remarks, "The Master (Dignaga) has dropped the characteristic of non-illusoriness, since this non-illusoriness is suicidal for his whole system."[15] But why is it so? Stcherbatsky explains: such an addition could be "interpreted as excluding the view of the Yogacaras, for whom all empirical cognition was a hopeless illusion."[16] If ideas alone are real, all knowledge of ordinary life—being knowledge after all of external things—is necessarily illusory. How then can an honest Vijnana-vadin think of qualifying right perception as being non-illusory? We shall presently see, one of the main arguments of the Vijnana-vadin is that all knowledge—particularly, all perceptions—are to be interpreted in the model of the patent cases of illusions, hallucinations and dreams. In short, to talk of right perception as non-illusory amounts to the surrender of Vijnana-vada, which Dignaga does not want to do.

But this, it is not difficult for Dharmakirti to see, is not being basically serious about perception itself. How can one at all discuss perception as a form of right knowledge, without excluding the possibility of confusing it with

15. *Ib.* i.158n.

16. *Ib.* i.156.

patent cases of illusions and hallucinations? He therefore finds it necessary to reformulate Dignaga's definition of perception by way of adding to it the characteristic non-illusoriness.

From the standpoint of the serious preoccupation with the *pramana*-s, the justification of this addition is obvious. But the question is: Is it justified also from the standpoint of strict Vijnana-vada? For the interpreters of Dharmakirti, the question is formidable and none of them can claim outright that the Master does it strictly in the capacity of an idealist. Vinitadeva wants to interpret this addition in a way which he hopes can somehow or other save idealism. But Dharmottara does not care for such a monoeuvre and gives an interpretation of non-illusoriness which is overtly against idealism, in fact more in conformity with its opposite. But how is this interpretation of Dharmottara to be justified? His own commentator—the author of the *tippani*—comes out with the frank admission that Dharmakirti himself, while defining perception, really surrenders his idealism and speaks from the standpoint of its opposite.

This controversy among Dharmakirti's interpreters is for us extremely significant. Let us note it in brief. Observes Vinitadeva[17]:

The word *abhranta* means non-illusory, i.e. which is not incongruent (*avisamvadaka*) in respect of the knowledge 'that makes one reach the object' (*prapaka-visaye*) . . . However the expression non-illusory is . . . not to be understood 'in respect of the object corresponding to a cognition (*alambana-visaye:* lit. 'object supporting a cognition'). If the expression non-illusory is admitted to be in respect of the object corresponding to a cognition, it would lead to the repudiation of the Yogacara view. Because, in the Yogacara views, all cognitions (so far as they refer) to any corresponding object are false. And thus the composition of the treatise would result in the repudiation of the above view. But the treatise is going to be composed with the intention of explaining the views of both the Sautrantika and Yogacara. The expression non-illusory in the sense of

17. Gangopadhyaya (tr). Vinitadeva *NBT* 93-5.

'not incongruent in respect of the knowledge that makes one reach the object' is, however, acceptable to both.

Let us try to understand the statement of Vinitadeva just quoted. One point about it needs to be immediately noted. Vinitadeva suggests that the expression non-illusory in the context of perception can be interpreted in two ways. Both these are fully in accord with the Sautrantika standpoint of the antithesis of idealism. What he is anxious to add is that one of these interpretations is acceptable also for the Yogacaras, which therefore is the right interpretation of Dharmakirti's view. Does this mean that the anti-idealist bias inherent in the use of the expression is already there; it remains for the interpreter only to tone it down so that it can be made to fit with the idealist standpoint as well? In any case, he argues that non-illusory is to be taken to mean not-incongruent—or consistent with—fact, and moreover, a finer distinction has to be drawn between consistent in the sense of reaching the object and consistent in the sense of having object to correspond to it: only the former of the two senses can be reconciled to idealism while both the senses are acceptable to the antithesis of idealism. All this leaves unanswered two questions. How can the Yogacaras, consistently with the claim that ideas alone are real, at all talk of knowledge leading to the actual attainment of the object? How can knowledge at all lead to the attainment of the object without the object being there? Vinitadeva does not raise these questions, not to speak of answering them. His only purpose is somehow or other to reconcile Dharmakirti's definition of perception with idealism and this he hopes to do with the above interpretation.

But Dharmottara—apparently much more interested in Dharmakirti's understanding of perception than in its possible compatibility with idealism—wants summarily to brush aside all these discussions of Vinitadeva. The starting point of Vinitadeva is the assumption that non-illusory in the context of perception means not-incongruity—or consistency—with facts. This, says Dharmottara, is abso-

lutely puerile, because, as Satkari Mookherjee[18] explains, "from the context which treats of true and authentic knowledge—and of perception as a subspecies of the same —we have it that perception must not be incongruent with fact, because authentic knowledge connotes this very congruence and not anything else". Vinitadeva's interpretation thus resulted in a tautology. As Dharmottara[19] puts it: "In any case, one should not take *non-illusive* here to be an equivalent of *consistent* (*avisamvadaka*). Direct perception is nothing but a variety of consistent knowledge. This circumstance alone is sufficient for making it consistent. To repeat it would be useless. The meaning of the sentence (defining perception) would then be: 'that kind of consistent knowledge which is called direct perception is free from construction and is consistent'. Perfectly useless repetition!"

What then is the interpretation of 'non-illusive'? Dharmottara[20] answers that it means "without disagreement with the actual object presented in it—an object that is capable of serving the practical purposes of everyday life" (*arthakriyaksame vasturupe'viparyastam*). This means that a perception is non-illusive in so far as (1) it is not contrary to the real object presented by it, and (2) this real object actually serves the practical purposes of everyday life. But the points are flatly against Vijnana-vada, according to which (1) there is no real object over and above the bare facthood of knowledge, and (2) all transactions of practical life have relevance for one only in so far as one labours under the spell of illusion. But Dharmottara's attitude is quite simple. He is interested only in the actal implications of Dharmakirti's understanding of perception, and so it is not for him to twist these implications and make them somehow or other fit with Vijnana-vada. We may quote him again at some length:[21]

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18. Mookherjee BPUF 277.
19. Stcherbatsky BL ii.18.
20. Dharmottara *NBT* i.4.
21. *Ib.* i.4. Translation broadly based on Stcherbatsky.

What the essence of perception is you and I very well know in general. It is a kind of knowledge that makes us feel that the objects are present to us directly... The term 'direct knowledge' or perception is familiar to everybody from its application to the variety of direct cognition which makes the objects present to our sense-faculties and which is invariably connected with them... Non-illusive means knowledge which is not at variance with this object... But if the second characteristic of 'not being an illusion' were not added the following misconception would not have been guarded against. There are some who maintain that the vision of a moving tree by an observer travelling by boat and similar perceptions are right perceptions... Indeed, a man acting upon such a perception reaches something which is a tree, hence it is supposed that experience supports his perception... In order to guard against this view the characteristic of 'not being an illusion' has been inserted. It is an illusion. It is not a right perception... We maintain therefore that the vision of a moving tree is error. If it is an error, how are we to explain that a tree is nevertheless reached when acting upon such erroneous perception? The tree is not really reached upon it, since the tree changing its position in space is the definite image corresponding to visual sensation and a tree fixed on one place is actually reached. Therefore, any object which has produced the sensation of a moving tree is not actually reached. and conversely the tree actually reached is not the object which has produced the visual sensation. Nothing at all is reached on the basis of this wrong cognition. If a tree is actually reached. it depends upon an altogether different cognitive act. Thus it is that the characteristic 'non-illusion' has been introduced in order to clear away the theory (that illusion may lead to success).

The whole drift of the argument is characterised by the spirit of the opposition of idealism than idealism itself. What is all the more remarkable is that in the course of this discussion, Dharmottara in fact answers one of the pet arguments with which the Vijnana-vadins want to refute their opponents. Thus while the Vijnana-vadins claim that all knowledge of eveyday life is to be understood on the model of illusion because there is no sure criterion to differentiate normal valid experience from illusion, their opponents argue that there is actually such a criterion and

it is the success of valid knowledge in our practical life. As against this, the Vijnana-vadins argue that success in practical life cannot be considered a sound criterion for truth, for even patently illusory experiences can lead to such success. We shall later see more of this controversy. For the present the point is that in the discussion just quoted, Dharmottara in fact refutes the argument with which the idealists want to refute their opponents: it is taking only a very superficial view of things to imagine that illusions can lead to the attainment of an object. The illusion of a moving tree never enables one to reach the actual tree: if the tree is actually reached it is reached on the basis of some other knowledge, which is valid and not illusory.

And still, Dharmottara is explaining the position of Dharmakirti and Dharmakirti is a Vijnana-vadin! How can this be possible at all?

The commentator of Dharmottara—the author of the *tippani*—gives a very simple answer. Dharmakirti, he says, is a famous exponent of Vijnana-vada no doubt. But he does not discuss the problem of perception from the same standpoint. On the contrary, he discusses it in the actual capacity of a Sautrantika philosopher, assuming for the purpose the reality of the external world: *bahyanayena sautrantika-matanusarena acaryena laksanam krtam*![22]

Does this amount to a frank admission that logic and idealism do not go together? For the other idealists like Nagarjuna and Candrakirti, Samkara and Sriharsa, this is practically a part of philosophical common sense. So also for the predecessors of Dignaga and Dharmakirti—the earlier Yogacaras—for whom all knowledge of ordinary life is illusory. Dignaga and Dharmakirti want to deviate from this general drift of Indian idealism. This results in a crisis and the crisis becomes particularly acute when it comes to the question of qualifying perception as non-illusory, which Dharmakirti wants boldly to do. But how can he do it? Assuming—which it is difficult to contest—

22. *Tippani* 19.

that Dharmottara understands him well, Dharmakirti can do it only by staking his idealism.

Dignaga evidently knows better. Vijnana-vada demands that all knowledge of everyday life is to be condemned as illusory. Hence it is dangerous for a Vijnana-vadin to talk of any perception which is non-illusory. Therefore he prefers to seek safety in silence. If Dharmakirti thinks that this is not being really serious about valid knowledge—particularly perception—that cannot perhaps be just helped. The Vijnana-vadin, as Vijnana-vadin, cannot be really serious about the *pramana*-s. What is actually discussed by him as *pramana* is something that remains within the general structure of illusion.

But then why discuss the *pramana*-s at all? The only answer to this for a consistent idealist is that, though without any ultimate validity, the *pramana*-s have some sort of provisional validity—validity namely for the crude purposes of practical life. The two standpoints are not to be confused. These are the standpoints of the ultimate truth and of the provisional truth of practical life. The former is called *paramarthika-satya*, the latter *samvrti-satya* or *vyavaharika-satya*.

Whatever be the worth of this theory of "two truths", Dignaga has it in mind and it is on its strength that he dares to be serious about the *pramana*-s. This is evident from the way in which Jinendrabuddhi interprets his position.

While commenting on Dignaga, Jinendrabuddhi naturally faces the following problem. According to Vijnana-vada only knowledge or idea is real, while the discussion of the *pramana*-s presupposes the distinction between the knower, the known and the knowledge itself. How, then, can Dignaga discuss the *pramana*-s? Answers Jinendrabuddhi:[23]

This can be explained in the following way. From the standpoint of the Absolute Reality (*paramarthatah*), the relations of object, subject and the instruments of knowledge do not exist at all. But there is no contradiction in thus using these expressions in common life, although they

23. Stcherbatsky BL ii. 389-99.

are really identical (as referring to the same reality), just as we say 'Light illuminates by its lusture', instead of simply saying 'There is light'...

But (if the parts of an act of cognition and its result can be arbitrarily assigned), why then has it been said (by Dignaga) that the result of the act of cognising is self-consciousness? This has been said from the standpoint of the Ultimate Reality (*paramarthatah*). Self-consciousness represents the result, because there is nothing beyond it; it is identical with our knowledge in general. It is not a contradiction, when it is said that the cognition of the object can be regarded as a result, because artificially (*upacarat*: metaphorically) we can differentiate it in a process and a result, and then the supposed cognition of the object will be the result. Hence, since there is nothing existent beyond 'mere awareness as such' (*samvedana-matra-eva*), the 'grasping' aspect of the awareness is said to represent the act (*pramana*) of cognition and its 'grasped' aspect the object (*prameya*) of cognition.

The controverted point is the following one. How is it possible that from the standpoint of a philosopher who denies the existence of an external world, there nevertheless is a differentiation of the 'grasping' and the 'grasped' aspect in that knowledge, which in itself does not contain any differentiation of a source and a result of cognition? Therefore, in order to solve this doubt, it is said by Dignaga 'thus it is (that our knowledge appears in different aspects)'.

The general meaning of this passage is the following one. Form the standpoint of Thisness (i.e. of the Absolute Reality) there is nc difference at all! But hampered as we are by transcendental illusion (*avidya*), (we have to labour under a distortion). All that we know is exclusively its distorted appearance as differentiated by the construction of a difference of a subject and an object. Therefore the differentiation into cognition and its object is made from the empirical (*yatha drstam*) point of view, but not from the point of view of Absolute Reality (*yatha tathatam*).

But how is it that a thing which is in itself not differentiated appears as differentiated?

(Through Illusion). Just as, when our faculty (of vision) is damaged by magical interference or other causes, we deem to distinguish separate bodies of elephants and other animals in what are simply lumps of clay, and just as in

a desert at a great distance we may perceive (the mirage). ...Just so this our consciousness, because we are blinded by a Transcendental Illusion, appears in a form which in reality it does not possess... Plurality is nothing but illusion (*mithya eva*) and we—worldly beings to whom absolute knowledge not distorted into the double form of the subject and the object is inaccessible—must be regarded as blinded by the spell of transcendental illusion.

So Dignaga virtually admits that whatever he has to say about logic is restricted to the general framework of illusion. But, asks Candrakirti, if this is so, why make so much fuss about reforming logic? Why not leave it as it is worked out by the Naiyayikas, who take the material world and practical life seriously? If this logic is not good enough for practical life, let those that are really serious about practical life try to reform it. Why should an idealist, who views practical life as the life of labouring under illusion, waste his time and energy in reforming it? Besides, the fact is that the Nyaya logic is much nearer to the conceptions of humanity than what the neo-logicians have to say. Therefore, in so far as even the idealists also require logic for the purpose of their practical life, it is better for them to depend on the existing Nyaya logic. In fact, the Sunyavadin proposes to do this. Dignaga and his followers propose to reform logic without being basically serious about logic. This is perfectly useless. As Candrakirti[24] puts it.

However there is still a question to be considered, namely the theory of our Buddhist epistemologists. "We are only giving," they maintain, "a scientific description of what just happens in common life, in regard to the sources of knowledge and their respective objects. We do not consider their transcendental reality." The Madhyamika asks: But what is the upshot of such a description? Does it lead to the cognition of the Absolute? The lagicians answer, "No; but bunglers in logic, the Naiyayikas, have given wrong definitions of logical processes and we have given the right ones." This, the Madhyamika replies, is also beyond the mark, because if the realistic logicians, the Naiyayikas,

24. See Stcherbatsky CBN 211-2.

are bad logicians, and have given wrong definitions of logical processes, then there must be a gap between what humanity at large imagines about the essence of cognition and what the realists are teaching. Then alone will your emendatory work prove promising. But this not the case. Your work, therefore, is a quite useless occupation.

To sum up: From the standpoint of strict idealism, logic has meaning only within the limits of illusion. Dignaga admits this and yet wants to be serious about logic! We shall presently try to understand his dilemma more fully.

5. Evidence of Dream and Illusion

As contrasted with Dharmakirti, the earlier Vijnanavadins, far from showing any anxiety to talk of the non-illusory experience, argue that the inherent illusoriness of experience is a definite proof for their philosophical position. This argument is, in other words, that all experience is to be understood on the model of the well-known illusory experiences, or of dreams and hallucinations. Hence, while surveying the proofs for philosophical idealism, Kumarila remarks that of the two epistemological arguments of the idealists one is the illusoriness of all experiences This argument, as Kumarila understands it, is basically an inferential one (*anumanatah*). Therefore, following the Indian norm of expressing an inference, he sums it up as follows:[25]

The experience of the pillar etc. is false (or illusory). Because it is an experience.

Whatever is an experience is found to be false (or illusory). Just as the experience in dreams etc.

Let us first try to be clear about its implications. By 'the experience of the pillar etc.' is meant here all that is ordinarily considered as normal waking experience, the experience of the pillar being only a typical form of it. But what is meant by the statement that all such experiences are false or illusory? It does not obviously mean

25. Kumarila *SV niralambana-vada* 23.

that the fact of the experience itself is in question. The experience is there no doubt: one does have the experience of the pillar, or the knowledge of the pillar, or more simply the idea of the pillar. What is false or illusory about it is its claim to be a pointer to something real, existing in the material world outside the mind. The experience wants to be informative about an actual pillar, and this information is baseless. In this sense, the experience is false. But why is the information false? Because there is no such thing as a pillar at all. The experience of the pillar, conveying as it does the misleading or wrong information of a material pillar, is false or illusory. Since all experiences are ordinarily supposed to be experiences of the material things and since the material things do not really exist, the idealist asserts his general proposition: 'Whatever is an experience is found to be false.'

According to the norm of Indian logic, the general proposition used in an inference has immediately to be substantiated by some fact observed. Thus it is not permissible to assert 'all cases of smoke are cases of fire' without at the same time mentioning 'just as in the kitchen oven'. In the same manner, the general proposition of the idealist, that all experience is inherently false, can be legitimate only on the strength of some well-known cases where the experience is found to be false in the sense of being a pointer to a non-existing thing. Accordingly, the idealist mentions the instances of the dreams etc. Things experienced in dreams do not really exist before the dreamer. The kind of experience one has in dream is an illusory experience in the sense of being a pointer to non-existing things. What is true of dream is also true of the hallucinations or illusions. Referring to all these, the inference mentions: 'Just as the experience of dreams etc.' The experiences one has in dreams, illusions and hallucinations point to things that are actually fictitious. In the idealist view, so are all experiences. Only the fact of the experience is there; but there is no material thing in the external world to correspond to it.

Vasubandhu, formulates this argument, in his usual cryptic form. He opens his famous work in twenty verses intended "to prove that ideas and ideas alone are real" (*Vijnapti-matrata-siddhi*) with the following:[26]

Everything is to be known as bare idea, because of the total unreality of the object indicated by it, just as the seeing of the hairs, double-moon, etc. by one suffering from *timira*.

Timira means visual disorder, some kind of eye disease. One suffering from it, is peculiarly prone to hallucinations —sees tuft of hair or the double-moon. The hair, like the double-moon, exists nowhere. These are totally unreal. Still the fact is that one sees these, or has the ideas of these. Such then are the typical cases of ideas existing without corresponding objects. Vasubandhu argues that all experience is to be understood like that. The ideas are there, but the things pointed to by the ideas are not there. Hence ideas and ideas alone are real.

This argument may at first sight give us the impression of a crazy generalisation. Since some ideas are object-less, all ideas are supposed to be so.

It will however be an error to treat the argument lightly. Vasubandhu is no child in philosophy. Besides, even the outstanding opponents of Indian idealism neither understand nor contest the argument simply as a case of illicit generalisation though, as we shall later see, some of them rightly argue that the argument cannot be fully free from a certain amount of illicit generalisation. But these opponents of idealism also feel that a number of serious philosophical issues are involved in the argument, which therefore are to be clarified before answering it fully.

What then is the main point of the argument?

The greatest difficulty in proving that ideas alone are real is the general belief that experience is irresistibly the experience of physical things. One actually perceives the rivers, mountains, trees, houses, etc. These perceptions

26. Vasubandhu *VMS* 1.

are too vivid to be summarily dismissed. How, in the face of this, can one argue that the things perceived do not just exist? If there is no mountain to be seen, how can one see a mountain at all?

There is only one way for the idealist to answer this. And this is to silence, once for all, the pretentious claim of experience to point to the material things. But how is this claim to be silenced? Indian idealists suggest two methods for the purpose.

The first of these—which we propose to discuss more fully in the next section—is to prove by a direct examination of the fact of experience that no material thing of the world is actually reached by it. Experience is nothing but the experience of something mental—a mere sensation or a mere idea—for none can jump out of the circle of such sensations and ideas and reach the physical thing directly. This argument, as Kumarila[27] says, is based on an analysis of the general capacity of perception or direct experience (*pratyaksa-sakti*), and we shall presently return to it.

But it is not this argument that Vasubandhu is referring to. He mentions another—and presumably an older—way of blowing the myth that experience is necessarily the experience of material things. This is proved by the patent cases of illusions and hallucinations.

The common belief that we can see a tree because there is an actual tree, assumes that the physical thing is the cause and our experience of it is the effect. But is there such a relation between the two? If so, none can ever experience the thing when the thing is not there, because the effect is impossible without the cause. If, therefore, one can experience a tree even when it is absent, the generalised claim that experience is necessarily the experience of the physical things, has to be abandoned. But does one perceive a tree where there is no tree? One does; and this is evident from dreams.

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27. Kumarila *SV niralambana-vada* 18-19.

Therefore dreams prove precisely what the idealists want to prove: experience itself is no guarantee for the objective existence of the things experienced.

Besides the evidence of experience without any corresponding thing is not confined to dreams alone. It is fully corroborated by the experience of illusions and hallucinations even of the waking state. The double-moon seen because of visual disorder nowhere exists; and yet it is definitely perceived. While travelling on a boat, one sees trees running in the opposite direction, though the 'running tree' nowhere exists. What the idealists want to impugn is the very credibility of experience to point to external things. It is proved by dreams, illusions and hallucinations.

Interestingly, in the history of European philosophy also, Bishop Berkeley sees the great importance of exactly this line of argument for the purpose of proving his idealism. He claims that "what happens in dreams, frenzies and the like, puts it beyond dispute that it is possible we might be affected with all the ideas we have now, though no bodies (i.e. physical things) existed without (i.e. outside the mind) resembling them. Hence it is evident the supposition of external bodies is not necessary for the producing our ideas."[28] Elsewhere he argues, "It will be objected that we see things actually without or at a distance from us, and which consequently do not exist in the mind, it being absurd that these things which are seen at the distance of several miles, should be as near to us as our own thoughts. In answer to this, I desire it may be considered, that in a dream we oft perceive things as existing at a great distance off, and yet for all that, those things are acknowledged to have their existence only in the mind."[29]

All this is very near to what Sthiramati, the disciple of Vasubandhu, says for the rejection of the reality of the external things. The experience of things cannot prove their reality in the external world, "since it is an indisputable

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28. Berkeley 121-22.

29. *Ib.* 132.

fact that in dreams and in hallucinations, we have perceptions without any corresponding external object at all".[30] Elsewhere, he explains the argument in more detail[31]:

Indeed, no sensible objects are at all perceived outside consciousness. This is proved by dreams and hallucinations. Consciousness itself appears in dreams in the garb of external sensible objects. Supposing 'a' is the cause of 'b'; it is then impossible that 'b' should appear in the absence of 'a'. If our ideas were produced by external objects, they could not arise in dreams. We therefore must know that consciousness containing ideas of objects arises without any external objects at all.

It remains for us to see what a wide range of philosophical problems has to be covered by the opponents of Indian idealism for the purpose of answering such an apparently simple argument.

6. Identity of Knowledge and Objects Known (*sahopalambha-niyama*)

If, as understood by his commentators, Dharmakirti, in trying to be serious about non-illusory experience, creates a crisis for idealism, it is interesting to note that he also furnishes Indian idealism with one of the strongest epistemological considerations in its favour. In Indian terminology, it is known as the *sahopalambha-niyama,* and, as we have already observed, it is precisely the same argument with which Berkeley tries to prove idealism. The havoc still being done by this argument in European philosophy is well-known. A review of Dharmakirti's *sahopalambha-niyama,* therefore, has for us a wider interest than that of the restricted one of understanding the Indian philosophical situation.

Particularly because of the cryptic mode of expression usually followed by the advanced Indian philosophers, the

30. Stcherbatsky (tr) *MV* 96. 31. *Ib.* 43.

way in which Dharmakirti himself formulates the argument may appear to be somewhat difficult for those that are not trained in the technicalities of Indian philosophy. But the argument itself is simple, howsoever devastating may be its consequences for science and everyday life. Let us first discuss the main points of the argument in a simpler form and then return to see the way in which Dharmakirti expresses it.

A philosopher is entitled to admit the reality of only that which is actually known, i.e. for the existence of which there is some positive evidence. The other alternative is to make the absurd claim that something is real though there is no positive evidence for its existence. With this minimum assumption, let us try to examine the ordinary belief that there are material things—an orange for example—existing in the material world. The first point naturally is: What exactly is known about the existence of such a thing? The usual answer is that we see it, taste it, smell it, touch it, and so on. But what precisely does this mean? It simply means that we have the sensations of colour, taste, smell, touch, etc. But a sensation is just a sensation and it is something patently mental—like pleasure, pain or the tickling experienced. It is ordinarily assumed of course that there exist material things to which these sensations or ideas corresponded. But there is no basis at all for such an assumption, because one can never directly know the material thing. Howsoever hard one may try to know such a thing, what one actually stumbles upon is nothing but a sensation or idea. Thus the law is that we never know an object as distinct from the sensations or ideas. Whatever is known is known as identical with the ideas. This is what Dharmakirti means when he claims that the law is that what is experienced is identical with the experience itself.

Dharmakirti puts this argument cryptically: "The object known as blue and the knowledge thereof are identical, because of the law of their being invariably known as in-

separable."[32] Explaining the position of the idealists, Kumarila refers to this argument as the one based on the direct examination of the power of perception: perception, properly analysed, is found to reveal only a piece of experience and as such what is actually experienced is identical with experience itself.

Thus far the argument of Dharmakirti is practically identical with that of Berkeley. Where he differs is on drawing the raw consequences of this argument. If the identity of the experienced with experience itself proves that ideas alone are real, how are we to view the things that are ordinarily imagined to exist in the material world outside the mind? For the Indian Vijnana-vadins there is only one answer to this. Such things are simply illusory—like the double-moon perceived because of visual disorder. But why do people usually believe in the reality of things ordinarily perceived? Because of the general spell of illusion on them. Therefore, like the followers of Sunya-vada and Maya-vada, the Vijnana-vadins also take a great deal of care to work out the mechanism of illusion that creates the false sense of the material world, though the terms used by them for the purpose are not necessarily the same as those generally used by the Sunya-vadins or Maya-vadins. But this does not alter the matter. Indian idealism, in all its forms, is fully committed to the theory of illusion as some kind of a *demiourgos* that fashions a false world. We shall later see this theory in some details.

7. Idealism and Illusionism

It may be of some interest to digress here a little and note at least an apparent difference between Indian idealism and idealism in modern European philosophy. While the former views the world as illusory, the latter does not. How far then is idealism necessarily committed to illusionism?

32. Quoted Madhava *SDS* 13.

We may conveniently begin this discussion with Berkeley. In spite of depending on the same argument as that of the Vijnana-vadin to prove that ideas and ideas alone are real, Berkeley strongly hesitates to admit that this means that the world is illusory. As he puts it, "it will be objected that by the foregoing principles, all that is real and substantial in nature is banished out of the world and instead thereof of a chimerical scheme of ideas takes place... What must we think of houses, rivers, mountains, trees, stones; nay even of our own bodies? Are all these but so many chimeras or illusions on the fancy?"[33]

Berkeley wants to evade such a consequence of his argument. At the same time he sees that it can be evaded only by a miracle, i.e. by the direct intervention of god to accomplish what is otherwise impossible. He argues that though all the socalled material things are nothing but ideas, these are after all not purely our own ideas but the ideas of god 'imprinted' on us. One's own ideas can be the products of pure fancy and hence totally fictitious. But the ideas of god are forced on our minds and these have all the substantiality of the material things. As he puts it, "The ideas imprinted on the senses by the author of nature are called *real things*."[34] As god's ideas, things are substantial and objective, and are not to be equated to mere fanciful ideas or illusions. There is therefore no difficulty about the fact that what our own ideas cannot achieve, god's ideas can: the mere idea of food and fire cannot nourish and burn, but as god's ideas the things called food and fire can. These have, in other words, all the physical characteristics which Berkeley's own idealism is designed to deny. Only the word physical—or, as Berkeley says, what the philosophers call 'matter'—has at any rate to be avoided.

Thus Berkeley hopes to avoid the consequences of his philosophy, about which his Indian counterparts show no hesitation. The reality of the material world, which he

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33. Berkeley, 129. 34. *Ib.* 128.

banishes through the front door is smuggled in through the back door as it were. This is done under the cover of theology.

One important reason for this is his anxiety to show that idealism is not in any open confrontation with the positive sciences. He lives in an age in which it is too bold to proclaim that nature and its laws—which the sciences explore—are outright fiction. These, as he says, display "the goodness and wisdom of that governing Spirit, whose will constitutes the laws of nature".[35] God, being omnipotent, can easily help Berkeley to achieve what is otherwise impossible, namely to smother the inherent hostility of idealism to science which is 'instinctively materialistic'.

All this, it is usually said, shows Berkeley's tendency to shift from subjective idealism to objective idealism—a shift from the view that everything is one's own ideas to the view that these are over-individual ideas. What is really missing in such a description, however, is that the whole thing is only a makeshift. It calls for the most extraordinary assumption that god's ideas—though nothing but ideas—have all the characteristics of the material things only with the omission of the word 'matter'. What needs to be said about this is said by Lenin:[36]

But Berkeley was not only candid as to the tendencies of his philosophy, he also endeavoured to cover its idealistic nakedness, to represent it as being free from absurdities and acceptable to 'common sense'... Nature remains, and the distinction between realities and chimeras remains... Berkeley does not deny the existence of real things! Berkeley does not go counter to the opinion of humanity! Berkeley denies 'only' the teaching of the philosophers, viz the theory of knowledge, which seriously and resolutely takes as the foundation of all its reasoning the recognition of the external world and the reflection thereof in the minds of men. Berkeley does not deny natural science, which has always adhered (mostly unconsciously) to this, i.e. the materialist theory of knowledge... [His attitude is this:] Let us regard the external

35. *Ib.*

36. Lenin MEC 16-18.

world, nature, as 'a combination of sensations' evoked in our mind by a deity. Acknowledge this, and give up searching for the 'ground' of these sensations outside the mind, outside men, and I will acknowledge within the framework of my idealist theory of knowledge *all* natural science and all the use and certainty of its deductions.

The tendency to accommodate the reality of the material world within the framework of idealism finds a more gorgeous expression in the philosophy of Hegel, the peculiarity of which it is necessary for us to see for understanding the question of idealism and illusionism.

As an idealist, Hegel claims that the ultimate reality is the spirit. He refers to it variously as Thought, Reason, Idea, Absolute, etc., and also by the rather plebeian word god. This Thought is viewed not as the thought of any individual, it is conceived instead as something like the 'objective world-power that accomplishes its own realisation'.

Though Thought or Spirit is the only reality, it does not follow that the things of the world are mere illusions. All these are real, though not as ordinarily imagined but in the restricted sense of being the expression or manifestation of Thought or Spirit. It is only through this manifestation that Thought moves forward to its own self-realisation. As Hegel puts it, Thought has to negate itself and assume the form of the material world, though in order only to move forward to its highest form of self-fulfilment, which it eventually reaches only by negating again the material world. Thought thus returns to itself in the form of self-conscious Thought.

At the beginning Spirit or Thought exists as bare Thought, i.e. Thought in its premundane loneliness. Put more simply, it means something like the state of god before the creation of the world. In Hegel's terminology, it is Thought or Absolute 'in itself'. It has at this stage nothing to witness but the furious fight of its own empty categories. Eventually, as if disgusted with this, Thought develops a craving for actuality, which it can satisfy only

by transforming itself into its opposite, i.e. by attaining the form of the material world. In Hegel's terminology, this is Thought or Absolute 'out of itself'—Thought in its self-estrangement, as something alien to itself. In simpler language, this perhaps means that god creates nature out of himself and in the form of something opposed to himself. God, the thesis, becomes nature, the antithesis. But this negation does not mean annihilation. The Spirit does not cease to be real because of its estrangement or alienation. It thrives through the estranged or the alienated, for the estrangement is only self-estrangement. Besides this negation of Thought in the form of nature is not final. It awaits to be itself negated. And how does this negation of the negation take place? The Spirit or Thought returns from its self-estrangement or self-alienation back to itself, though this time at a higher level, i.e. in the form of self-conscious Thought. Thus is resolved the alienation and the highest synthesis attained.

But why does the originally pure immaterial Thought at all externalise itself in the form of the material world? Hegel answers that as pure immaterial Thought, the Absolute is not yet 'actual'. In order to be actual, it has first of all to undergo the experience of that which is opposed to itself. It is, as if, only by being once exiled one can realise what home means. Thought or Absolute, only by being once transformed into that which is alien to itself, returns to itself in an immeasurably richer form, with the treasures accumulaed as it were during its self-exile.

Told in such brief outlines, the story of the life-history of Thought cannot but appear as extraordinarily strange. The whole thing sounds like a fairy tale or mythology. Indeed the Hegelian system—understood in its bare outlines or without the factual materials stuffed into it—is aptly described as an 'ideological perversion'. Nevertheless, within the general structure of this phantasy what Hegel gains for world-philosophy is momentous. It is "the science of the general laws of motion, both of the material

world and of human thought", which is called his dialectics and which has for its real basis the encyclopaedic wealth of materials furnished practically by all the branches of science and history up to his time. As a matter of fact, it is this need for accommodating within his idealism all this wealth of scientific and historical materials that prevents him from an outright condemnation of the material world as illusory. Nature is somehow or other considered real, and it is the wealth of knowledge of nature inclusive of the human beings in it that gives his philosophy the great significance it has. As an idealist, however, he cannot straightforward admit that nature is real by its own right. He has to follow the tortuous path of justifying the reality of nature with the theory of self-alienation of Thought or Absolute.

Are we then justified in looking at Hegelian philosophy as representing idealism pure and simple? Is it idealism without any reservation? Engels[37] answers the question: "But during this long period from Descartes to Hegel and from Hobbes to Feuerbach, the philosophers were by no means impelled, as they thought they were, solely by the force of pure reason. On the contrary, what really pushed them forward most was the powerful and ever more rapidly onrushing progress of natural science and industry. Among the materialists this was plain on the surface, but *the idealist systems also filled themselves more and more with a materialist content* and attempted pantheistically to reconcile the antithesis between mind and matter. Thus, ultimately, *the Hegelian system represents merely a materialism idealistically turned upside down in method and content*".

Thus, under the growing pressure of science and industry, philosophical idealism is already bending towards its opposite. Hegel smuggles materialism within the general structure of his idealist outlook, so much so that his philosophy no longer remains idealism pure and simple but virtually becomes some kind of inverted materialism.

37. Engels LF 22. Italics added.

We can now understand the significance of the shift of Hegel's position from that of the ancient idealists like Plato, who declares that the world is a mere foolish phantom. Hegel cannot be so extravagant. Living as he does in an age of progress of science and technology, he has to concede reality to the material world and reconcile this with his idealism. However, does this shift from the position of the early idealists mean the development of a new variety of *idealism in its strict sense*? Idealism as idealism does not lead Hegel to this amendment. What leads him to it is rather the way in which he, as a matter of fact, leans on materialism, perversely though. In this aspect of his philosophy, therefore, we are not to see the characteristic peculiarity of philosophical idealism.

We may now return to the Indian idealists. Free as they generally are from the pressure of the onrushing progress of science and industry, they have no anxiety of filling up their idealist system with materialist content. They present idealism with all its raw consequences—without covering its nakedness with the theological robes of Berkeley, and without cramming into it the materialist method and content as Hegel does. Idealism is for them a world-denying outlook in its full and frank sense.

The only exceptions to this are those later Vijnanavadins like Dignaga, Dharmakirti and their followers who show the new enthusiasm for logic. In the light of what is just discussed, we may perhaps guess—though, at the present stage of historical research, only somewhat vaguely—the possible cause of their peculiar contradiction.

This contradiction is not as deep as that of Hegelian philosophy. Yet the contradiction is there, and we have already noted it. It is basically the contradiction between their idealism and their logic—between their commitment to the totally world-denying outlook and their serious preoccupation with valid knowledge. For the other Indian idealists such a contradiction does not exist. Committed fully to the condemnation of the material world as some-

thing purely illusory, they are also committed to the total condemnation of experience and reason. Dignaga and Dharmakirti want to deviate from this general tendency. They propose to take experience and reason seriously. Dharmakirti even goes to the extent of characterising right experience of object as non-illusory or *abhranta*. The consequence is a kind of disaster. His own interpreters think that he has to stake for the purpose his affiliation to idealism.

But what it is that leads these philosophers to take such a risky step? At the present stage of research in the history of Indian science and technology, a full answer to this question may be lacking. Nevertheless, what is on the surface must not be overlooked. They live in an age which is most fruitful in the history of early Indian science and technology. The possibility of these pholosophers also being 'pushed forward' in their own way by the progress of science and industry cannot be ruled out. This may not result in anything more than their serious preoccupation with logic. In the history of Indian idealism, however, this preoccupation with logic is itself something extraordinary. It creates a crisis in idealism.

Stcherbatsky is about the only modern interpreter of traditional Indian philosophy to note this point. Here is how he describes the general historical background of the rise of the new enthusiasm for the *pramana*-s among the neo-Buddhists: "The following development became contemporaneous with the golden age of the Indian civilisation, when a great part of India was united under the prosperous rule of the national dynasty of the Guptas. Arts and sciences flourished and the Buddhists took a prominent part in this revival... Evidently in accordance with the spirit of this new age, the condemnation of all logic which characterised the preceding period was forsaken, and Buddhists began to take a very keen interest in the logical problems. This is the first outstanding feature of that period, a keen interest in logic, which to-

wards the end of the period becomes overwhelming and surpasses all the former theoretical part of Buddhism".[38]

Without being very romantic about what is generally called the golden age of the Guptas, it will be wrong to overlook the fact that Dignaga, Dharmakirti and their followers live in an age that witnesses an otherwise unusual series of achievements in the history of early Indian science and technology, a brief resume of which may be found in *A Concise History of Science in India.*[39]

The fuller benefits of these for philosophy can of course be derived by those that are not obsessed by the idea of the material world being illusory, i.e. by the opponents of Indian idealism. But even those that are thus obsessed cannot be fully free from the impact of these. They cannot maintain a totally negative attitude to experience and reason, the basis of science and technology.

8. Rejection of Causality

But let us return to the main theme of our present chapter—the major philosophical considerations with which the Indian idealists want to prove their case.

The three arguments of the idealists we have so far discussed—viz (1) the rejection of all the normal sources of knowledge, (2) the evidence of dream and illusion and (3) the *sahopalambha-niyama* or the law that direct experience is the experience only of the bare idea—are epistemological, i.e. based on the theory of knowledge.

But such epistemological considerations apart, the Indian idealists want to prove the unreality of the world also by a direct analysis of everything ordinarily supposed to exist in it. One of the arguments of this kind is their rejection of the concept of causality.

The starting point of this argument is that something

38. Stcherbatsky BL i.11-2.
39. Bose, Sen & Subbarayappa 609f.

which never comes into being has to be viewed as unreal. It is like 'the son of a barren woman ', which in Indian philosophy is a typical way of referring to the non-existent. It follows that for the purpose of being considered real, the minimum condition that has to be satisfied by a thing is 'to come into being'. If, therefore, the very concept of 'coming into being' is found to be illegitimate, the corollary is that everything is as fictitious as the son of a barren woman.

With an assumption like this, Nagarjuna—and, following him, also Gaudapada and Samkara—want to prove the unreality of everything by disproving the very concept of 'coming into being'. We shall concentrate here mainly on the way in which Nagarjuna wants to prove this, because he is the main architect of the argument.

He argues that there are only four possible ways of viewing a thing as 'coming into being', none of which can stand the scrutiny of logical analysis. These are:

(1) A thing comes into being from itself.

(2) It comes into being from something else altogether.

(3) It comes into being both from itself as well as from something else altogether.

(4) It comes into being neither from itself nor from something else, i.e. purely accidentally.

It is impermissible, argues Nagarjuna, to stick to any of these possibilities because, on being examined, each is found to be absurd. Since, however, there is no fifth way of viewing something as coming into being, the concept itself has to be abandoned.

The first possibility is untenable, because it is meaningless. There is no sense in asserting that a thing comes into being from itself, for it entails the assumption that the thing had already existed before its coming into being. As Nagarjuna puts it, "If something really does exist, its own repeated birth is just a nonsense." If it is assumed that the

jar already exists in the clay, what can be the sense in the assertion that the jar is produced over again from the clay? To put this in the typical Indian form of expressing a philosophical argument: "An entity does not require a second production. Because it exists. Just as a jar. Whatever exists does not require to be produced once more." To this Buddhapalita adds that the assumption that a thing comes into being from itself entails the further absurdity that it can never have an end, because in that case the thing should perpetually produce itself. If the jar already exists in the clay, it has also to be assumed that even after the jar is broken up and transformed into clay, it continues to exist because the clay is already assumed to contain it. How then can one imagine the destruction of the jar by transforming it back into clay? The first possibility of conceiving something as coming into being is thus futile.

But so, argues Nagarjuna, is the second possibility, viz the assertion that a thing comes into being from something else altogether. It results in the further assertion that anything can be produced from anything else. As Nagarjuna puts it, "If, to be sure, a thing were *other* in regard to causes, deep darkness would then be produced from light. Then surely, everything could be produced from anything, since the *otherness* is just the same in causes as well as non-causes." It is ordinarily assumed that oil is produced from oil-seeds. Now if oil-seeds are conceived as absolutely different from oil, the same status has to be granted to the sand-grains, because the sand-grains too are absolutely different from oil. The *otherness* exists for oil-seeds as much as for sand-grains. How is it then that oil is produced from oil-seeds and not from sand-grains? On the assumption that something can come into existence from something else altogether, it is as much permissible to think of oil being produced from the oil-seeds as from the sand-grains, because the sand-grains are as much alien to oil as the oil-seeds are supposed to be.

Nagarjuna thus disposes of the first two ways of conceiving something as coming into being. As for the third

and fourth possibilities, his comments are quite brief. The third possibility—namely, that a thing comes into being from itself as well as from something altogether different —is just a combination of the first two, and hence is committed to the combined absurdities of both. The fourth possibility, namely that something comes to being neither from itself nor from something else, means for Nagarjuna the virtual surrender of the attempt to explain the concept of coming into being, inasmuch as it means the admission that there is no reasonable explanation of its coming into being.

Nothing in the world can thus be viewed as coming into being. This means the rejection of the concept of causality: nothing in the world is caused, nothing is produced and hence everything is unreal. Nagarjuna sums up:[40]

> Nothing at all could we perceive
> In a universe devoid of causes.
> It would be like the colour and the scent
> Of a lotus growing in the sky.

For understanding of Nagarjuna's refutation of causality, it is relevant to note that among the foremost opponents of Indian idealism are prevalent two views of causality. These are known as *sat-karya-vada* and *asat-karya-vada* (or *arambha-vada*).

According to the first—which is the view of the Samkhya philosophers—the effect is something pre-existing in the cause, though only potentially. From this the Samkhya philosophers want to prove a material first cause of the world. If the effect is not anything absolutely new, the nature of the cause can be inferred from the nature of the effect. Since this world is essentially material, the first cause that we can infer for it must also be material. The Samkhya philosophers call this material first cause of the world *prakrti* or primeval matter.

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40. Stcherbatsky CBN 181.

According to the second view of causality (*asat-karya-vada* or *arambha-vada*), the effect is something different from the cause; it is a new beginning (*arambha*). The most prominent representatives of this view are the Indian atomists known as the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophers. Since everything in the world is produced by the different forms of atomic conjunctions, the things thus produced are to be viewed as different from the atoms themselves, which are the ultimate causes. From the same atoms of earth are produced a jar, an earthen plate or an earthen cup. This shows that neither the jar nor the plate nor the cup is already existing in their cause, namely the atoms of earth. The atoms being material, this view of causality also is related to the material first cause of the universe.

From the point of view of the idealists the atomic hypothesis is as undesirable as the hypothesis of the primeval matter of the Samkhyas. Thus is the need of refuting both.

The simplest way of doing this is to use the typical arguments of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas against the Samkhyas and of the Samkhyas against the Nyaya-Vaisesikas. Nagarjuna in fact does this, though with greater subtlety than Samkara who follows the same procedure for the same purpose.

What is completely overlooked however is the possibility of both these ways of looking at 'coming into being' as containing important elements of truth. *When posed against each other*, such elements of truth easily pass into their opposites no doubt, as these do in the cases of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas and Samkhyas themselves. But the two positions *can also be synthesised* and form the basis of a more adequate understanding of the nature of causality. 'Coming into being' represents the unity of the opposites—of 'to be' as well as of 'not to be'. The effect pre-exists in the cause as well as it does not; it is the actualisation of the potential as well as a new beginning.

Nagarjuna cursorily dismisses such a possibility as a theoretical farce. As the third possible way of looking at

causality, he simply speaks of a mechanical juxtaposition of the first two views and says that it is committed to the combined absurdities of both. Either accept being of the effect in the cause, or accept non-being of the effect in the cause. Since both the possibilities are by themselves inadmissible, change or becoming is only an illusion.

This is being true to the spirit of the Upanisadic idealists no doubt, but not to that of the founder of the creed which Nagarjuna ostensibly represents. The Buddha thinks otherwise. Instead of adhering to the rigid categories of pure being and pure nothing—of 'it is' and 'it is not'—he advises his followers to look at the world as in a perpetual flux, as the ceaseless process of coming into being and passing out of existence. This is his dialectical view and, as we shall later see, it is intertwined with the Buddha's vision of universal causation. Nagarjuna wants to discard it. But he has also to do something about the older position. What he actually does leads us to see how much of sophistry he is capable of.

9. 'Borrowed Reality' is no Reality

For Nagarjuna the problem of causality is thus more complicated than it is for Samkara. It is not enough for his purpose to reject the two views of causality upheld by the opponents of idealism. Being a Buddhist, he has to settle account with another view which, in the Buddhist tradition, is firmly fixed as preached by the Buddha himself. It is called *pratitya-samutpada,* usually rendered as the theory of 'dependent origination'. Its simplest formula is: 'that being present, this becomes; from the arising of that, this arises.' To the earlier Buddhists, the view of universal flux directly follows from it. The Sautrantikas go a step further and develop their theory of momentariness on its basis. As Candrakirti says, "The Sautrantikas maintain that *pratitya-samutpada* means appearance and imme-

diate disappearance of everything... The evanescent momentary things appear—that is their explanation."[41]

Understandably enough, such an interpretation of the theory cannot be accepted by Nagarjuna, particularly because of its incompatibility with his own view of the Absolute transcending all motion and multiplicity. At the same time, he cannot reject the theory outright, because it is supposed to form part of the direct teachings of the Buddha. He has, therefore, to reinterpret the theory in full conformity with his own view. In other words, he has to show that his rejection of the concept of causality and this theory of *pratitya-samutpada* point precisely to the same conclusion. In proving this, he converts the theory of *pratitya-samutpada* itself into an important ground for the denial of the reality of everything in the material world. "The law of dependent origination (*pratitya-samutpada*)", argues Nagarjuna, "is equivalent to and proof of the intrinsic unreality of things. A thing which is found to come into existence in dependence upon an antecedent fact must forfeit its claim to intrinsic reality... Whatever thing is found to derive its existence from an antecedent and thus depends upon the latter for its existence, cannot claim intrinsic reality of its own. If things were real in their own right and by their intrinsic nature, they could come into being independently of the antecedent causes and conditions. But, as a matter of fact, they are tagged on to the preceding events and as such cannot be conceived to have an intrinsic existence which a real, by the very definition of it, must be believed to possess."[42]

Briefly put, the argument is that a thing can be considered real only when it exists by its own right. Since however—as shown by the law of dependent origination—the existence of everything depends on certain conditions other than itself, nothing is real at all. As Stcherbatsky

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41. *Ib.* 125-6.
42. Nagarjuna *VV* 22. Mookherjee NNMRP i.17

explained, "A dependent existence is no real existence, just as borrowed money is no real wealth."[43]

Thus the theory of *pratitya-samutpada,* which originally means that every real thing has a cause—i.e. in the sense of the condition depending on which it acquires its origin —is twisted by Nagarjuna to mean that everything that has a cause is bound to be unreal. He wants to prove the essential unreality of the material world not only with his criticism of the view of causality as upheld by his philosophical opponents, but also by inventing a new interpretation of causation as preached by the founder of Buddhism. But more of this later.

10. Ignorance as Creator of the World-Illusion

We have thus seen some of the major considerations on the strength of which the Indian idealists hope to prove that the material world is ultimately unreal. Nevertheless the fact remains that it somehow or other *appears to be there.* How is this appearance to be accounted for? What is it that leads us to see matter where there is only spirit? All the Indian idealists—the Sunya-vadins, Vijnana-vadins and Maya-vadins—find it obligatory to answer this question and the answer they all offer is substantially the same. Briefly put, it is that the appearance of this false world is due to some defect in ourselves and that this defect is mainly of the nature of ignorance.

It is not difficult to see that this theory of ignorance causing the world-illusion is, in a very important sense, the very foundation of Indian idealism. In the popular understanding of Indian philosophy, the theory is associated only with the name of Advaita Vedanta, in which the terms for ignorance are *avidya and maya*. The great importance of the theory for the Advaita Vedantists need not be doubted. What needs to be added however is that it is not their innovation. Indian idealism has to lean on it

43. Stcherbatsky CBN 67.

throughout its career. Since all the idealists want to prove that the material world is unreal, all of them have also the need of offering some explanation for the appearance of this unreal world. And the explanation that proves convenient for them all is that the material world is conjured up by ignorance, it being commonly observed that ignorance leads one to see things that do not exist.

Let us first try to be clearer about this point. The example frequently mentioned of experiencing an unreal thing is that of seeing a snake in a rope. The snake is not there, and yet the fact is that it is perceived. But how is it that one perceives such an unreal snake? The only answer is that one does it only so long as one is under the spell of ignorance. When, instead of ignorance, one has right knowledge, one actually sees the rope and not the snake. This, according to the idealists, is evidence of the fact that ignorance has the power not only of concealing the real nature of the object but also of projecting on the object an unreal something created or conjured up by ignorance itself. Ignorance not only conceals the rope before; it also projects on the rope the phantom snake produced by itself. The same thing happens in the case of the dreams. While dreaming, one is under the spell of ignorance, and, because of this, one not only fails to see the things that are actually there before, but positively sees things that are not there. Another stock example of the idealists is that of the magician's trick. This trick is nothing but exploiting the function of ignorance in the spectator. The magician shows a phantom elephant on the stage. But how can he to do this? He keeps the spectator under the spell of ignorance, which not only disables the latter to see what is actually there on the stage but moreover to see positively what is not there.

With examples like these, the idealists want to establish the general proposition that ignorance has the dual power of concealing the real and projecting the unreal on the real—the unreal thus projected being nothing but a product of ignorance itself. Once this is established, they

claim that the mystery of experiencing matter where there is only spirit is easily explained. Such a mystery does not exist for the enlightened saints, who realise the exclusive reality of the spirit and are not deluded by the false show of a material world. Their experiences perfectly agree with what is recorded in the scriptures or *sastra*-s. On the ordinary people are deluded by the false show of the material world, because like children, they are unenlightened—are under the grip of ignorance. As it is put in the *Prajna-paramita-sutra*:[44] "All things are devoid of substantiality... This (unsubstantiality of things, which is their true nature) people do not know, and this is ignorance... (All things are unreal) and in regard to these the common people, owing to the power of ignorance and the thirst of passion, give rise to perversions and imaginative constructions. This is called ignorance... On account of their clinging in regard to things that are unreal, they yet give rise to (perverted) cognitions, (perverted) understandings and (perverted) views... So they are considered as common people, comparable to children... Because they lack the power of skilfulness, they give rise to imaginative constructions and cling (to things)."

Whether this doctrine of ignorance as the creator of the world-illusion is already evolved in the Upanisads, is a point on which the modern scholars are not agreed. Certain passages of the Upanisads give the impression of at least a tendency of moving towards it, though it is still largely mixed up with the mythological imagination of the ancient times. Thus it is declared:[45]

This whole world the illusion-maker projects out of this (*brahman*)
And in it by illusion the other is confined.
Now one should know that nature is illusion
And that the Mighty Lord is the illusion-maker.

Another oft-quoted passage describes the condition of the unenlightened soul as "... like gross darkness—the darkness of passion; like jugglery (*indrajala*)—consisting

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44. Venkata Ramanan 90.

45. *Sv Up* iv.9-10.

of illusion (*maya-maya*); like a dream—falsely apparent; like the pith of a banana-tree—unsubstantial; like an actor—in temporary dress; like a painted scene—falsely delighting the mind."[46] That such passages contain at least the rudiments of the theory of ignorance as the maker of the world-illusion, can hardly be doubted. Samkara's zeal to interpret all the major Upanisads as teaching this doctrine may be an exaggeration. But, as it is rightly pointed out, the idealistic speculations of the Upanisads identifying the ultimate reality with the soul surely contain at least the potentials of this doctrine. The authors of the Mahayana scriptures evidently take up the basic suggestion of it from the Upanisads, giving it a more definite shape. But the shape is not yet sophisticated enough. The first philosopher to develop a crafty defence of the theory is Nagarjuna, whose spell on all the later Indian idealists is undoubtedly very great.

The function of ignorance, he argues,[47] is misconstruction, i.e. wrongly perceiving something as different from its own nature. It is thus because of ignorance that the common people are led to imagine a real material world in place of the indescribable Absolute. This power of ignorance to generate an essentially perverted view of things is compared by Nagarjuna to that of the dreams, which creates all sorts of patently illusory things. He also repeatedly illustrates this power of ignorance with examples of sense-illusions and the magician's craft. However, though ignorance leads ordinary people to see the material world in place of the indescribable Absolute, it is wrong to think that reality itself is in the least tainted by it and its creations. This is a point on which, many centuries after Nagarjuna, Samkara and his followers dilate much. But Nagarjuna himself explains it with a simple analogy. "When the wise banish ignorance," says he, "then the truth of things shines again. For example, the thick cloud covers the nature of *akasa* (the sky) which is ever pure

46. *Maitri Up* iv.2. 47. Venkata Ramanan 89ff.

by nature. But when the clouds are blown away, then the purity of *akasa* shines forth once again."

But, it will be asked, what is the exact status of this ignorance? Is it something real or something unreal? Nagarjuna sees the difficulties of both the alternatives. If ignorance itself is something real, it is impossible to stick to the thesis that the indescribable Absolute is the only reality. Assuming, on the contrary, that this ignorance is something totally unreal—as unreal, for example, as the 'son of a barren woman'—it is impermissible to attribute to it any functional role or to claim that this ignorance has the great power of creating the world-illusion. How then is he to explain he exact status of ignorance?

From his own point of view, Nagarjuna has one answer. This ignorance, he wants us to believe, is itself highly mysterious—inasmuch as it is to be viewed as neither real nor unreal—neither as having any existence of its own, nor as having no existence of its own. As a recent exponent of Nagarjuna's philosophy puts it, "Ignorance is indeed a power that creates objects of experience; it has its nature and function; but it cannot be held on that account to be an ultimate entity. Ignorance is not wholly determinable as either existing or not existing."[48] This, again, is a point on which Samkara and his followers vitally depend. This ignorance, they claim, is neither real nor unreal and as such is *anirvacaniya* or 'the indescribable'. But, as we have already seen, so is the highest philosophical illumination from the point of view of Nagarjuna and Samkara: every attempt to describe reality is an attempt to squeeze it into some mundane category and is hence impermissible.

This therefore is a peculiarity of Indian idealism. Knowledge is indescribable and so also is ignorance. What is describable is only the people's folly of taking the material world seriously. Tons of books are produced by our idealists to describe this folly!

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48. *Ib.* 112.

After Nagarjuna, the view of ignorance creating the illusion of the material world is taken up by the Vijnana-vadins, though with some terminological variation and—as we shall later see—with a somewhat different understanding of the mechanism of the production of the illusory entities. However, depending on the patent examples of sense-illusions, hallucinations, dreams and the magician's craft, they elaborate basically the same theory of ignorance. In fact, the little that is needed to be added to it after Nagarjuna is done by Vasubandhu, Sthiramati[49] and other outstanding representatives of Vijnana-vada. After them, there remains practically the work of summing up the arguments and analogies of the Sunya-vadins and Vijnana-vadins in favour of this cardinal principle of Indian idealism. This is done by the Advaita Vedantists, whose main innovation in the matter is some terminological reshuffling again.

One form of this reshuffling is to emphasise the difference between primary ignorance called *mula avidya* and secondary ignorance called *tula avidya*,—the latter meaning some sort of ignorance within the broader structure of primary ignorance. From the idealist standpoint, the need for drawing such a distinction is obvious. The snake perceived in the rope is unreal no doubt. But so also is the rope perceived in the rope. If therefore it is the function of ignorance to manufacture unreal objects experienced, it has to be admitted that the snake perceived in the rope is as much a product of ignorance as the rope perceived in the rope, because the rope—like everything in the material world—is not there in spite of being perceived. Nevertheless, there is some palpable difference between the two cases. The error of seeing the snake in the rope is soon corrected by the eventual perception of the rope. But the general error of experiencing matter where there is only spirit continues to persist lifelong. As Nagarjuna admits—perhaps somewhat grudgingly—that even the enlightened

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49. Stcherbatsky (tr) *MV* 118ff.

saint with his full philosophical illumination continues to see the rope in the rope.

This then is a problem for the idealist. If the snake perceived in the rope is as much an illusion as the rope perceived in the rope, how is the palpable difference between the two to be accounted for? With the hope of explaining this the idealist has to dilate much on his theory of ignorance. He talks of a primary ignorance that causes the general illusion of the material world. Within the framework of this primary ignorance, he assumes a secondary ignorance which causes the patent forms of sense-illusions. It is because of primary ignorance that one sees the rope in a rope, but the snake in the rope is perceived because of the secondary ignorance. Though the latter provides the idealist with the model of explaining the former, it is after all an illusion within illusion and hence has to be given a different name. This secondary ignorance can be easily corrected even for the common man, who nevertheless remains under the general spell of the primary ignorance. But the primary ignorance itself cannot be so easily removed. It can be removed only by the highest transcendental knowledge, or the direct realisation of the exclusive reality of the spirit.

But what about the enlightened saint, who, in spite of this realisation, continues to see the material things? Their case, says the idealist, is somewhat like that of the magician—or of a spectator with full knowledge of the magician's stage-craft—witnessing the things conjured up by the magician's trick. Such a person sees the magically conjured up objects as much as the lay spectator. Unlike the lay spectator, however, he at the same time knows that though actually seen the objects are only conjured up by trick. With such an analogy, which is traceable as far back as the writings of Nagarjuna, the Indian idealists want to explain one of the major difficulties of their philosophical position.

11. Truths from the Standpoints of Theory and Practice

If the snake perceived in the rope proves very friendly for the Indian idealists, the snake perceived in the snake creates a great deal of trouble for them. While they can draw heavily on the examples of illusions, hallucinations and dreams for the purpose of proving the essential unreality of the objects actually experienced, what is generally acknowledged as the verdict of the normal waking experience goes strongly against their view. To evade this difficulty, they declare no doubt that the verdict of the normal waking experience has no validity at all, that none of the socalled sources of right knowledge can be philosophically trusted, that the waking experience is as bad as dream experience, that all perceptions are to be understood in the model of patent illusions, and so on. However, in spite of such summary condemnation of normal experience, the Indian idealists also feel uneasy about it. The snake perceived in the rope may be too harmless to disturb the philosopher's contemplation. But not so is the snake seen in the snake. It is something dangerous in actual life. Even the extreme idealist has to take reasonable practical precaution against it, without which the very existence of the philosopher—and therefore the possibility of his philosophising—is menaced.

The same is true of everything in the material world. The idealist can deny the reality of water as an imaginary product of ignorance. In his practical life, however, he has to run for water when thirsty. He has to eat food and wear clothes, in spite of claiming that all these are not real. It is no use laughing at all this as banal talk. The real problem posed is a serious one. Does the idealist philosopher, in his own practical life, disown the idealist outlook? The evidence of practical life, in other words, cannot be just overlooked. It wants to undermine the grand theoretical superstructure so laboriously built up by the idealists. This is therefore a problem and they have to offer some solution.

The awareness of the problem is perhaps not there during the Upanisadic age, when idealism is first foreshadowed in its originally naive form. We do not come across in these ancient texts any explicit tendency to reconcile philosophical idealism with some explanation of the verdict of practical life. With Nagarjuna it is different. Being the first sophisticated philosopher to defend idealism, he can clearly see the need of reconciling the idealist outlook with some explanation of the verdict of practice. Among the six main works attributed to him by an eminent authority on Mahayana Buddhism,[50] one is called the *Vyavahara-siddhi*, meaning 'proofs for a valid explanation of practical activities consistently with idealism'.

But how does Nagarjuna perform such a philosophical feat? He does it by inventing the theory of "two truths"—a theory that is reiterated only with some terminological variation by all the Indian idealists after him. The terms Nagarjuna himself uses for these "two truths" are *samvrti-satya* and *paramarthika-satya*. As is characteristic of him, he claims that the theory has the sanction of the Buddha himself. "The Buddhas", he says, "preach their view on the basis of the two truths. These are the *samvrti-satya* of the common people and the *paramartha-satya* of the enlightened. Those who are unaware of these two truths cannot understand the profound significance of the teaching of the Buddha".[51]

What is meant by these two truths? There is not much difficulty about the concept of the *paramartha-satya* or *paramarthika-satya*, which simply means the ultimate truth, the truth of the highest philosophical wisdom—the truth, in short, that the indescribable Absolute alone is real. This truth is supposed to be realised only by the enlightened saints. The common people or the vulgar mob, uninitiated in the idealist outlook, have no access to it. What they are obsessed with is another kind of truth, which the idealists also accept though purely for the crude

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50. Obermiller (tr) Bu-ston i.50f. 51. Nagarjuna *MK* xxiv.8.

purposes of practical life. This truth is called *samvrti-satya,* which literally means 'the truth that keeps the ultimate truth concealed'. Really speaking, it is not truth at all. In the standard of genuine philosophical wisdom it is on the contrary flatly false. But it is called truth by courtesy as it were for the practical purposes of ordinary life. The snake-seen-in-the-snake has some sort of truth, though strictly in reference to the practical life. But why call it a kind of truth, if it is really not so? Because it has a peculiar status as distinct from the patent illusions and total fictions (*alika*). The snake-seen-in-the-snake is different, on the one hand, from the snake-seen-in-the-rope and, on the other, from 'the son of a barren woman': the former is patently illusory and the latter totally fictitious.

A bare fiction—like the son of a barren woman—is never experienced, while the snake-seen-in-the-snake is actually experienced. Besides, it has no practical efficacy. It makes no sense to say that the son of a barren woman is tilling the ground. By contrast, the snake-seen-in-the-snake or the water-seen-in-the-pool is actually experienced and has moreover definite practical efficacy: the snake does bite and the water does quench thirst. The material things of the world cannot be viewed as bare fictions. Particularly because of their practical efficacy, these are to be viewed as containing some sort of truth or reality. This is not truth in the true sense. In the ultimate metaphysical sense, it is nothing but falsehood.

What then is the difference between the snake-seen-in-the-snake and the snake-seen-in-the-rope? Even the snake seen in the rope cannot be bare nothingness or a total fiction—like the son of a barren woman. Unlike the latter, the illusory snake is actually experienced and it has also some kind of limited practical efficacy, inasmuch as it makes one run in fear. Therefore this too is *samvrti*, though obviously of a lower grade: the illusion is soon dispelled and its practical efficacy is comparatively negligible. The illusory snake does not bite after all. Therefore, as contrasted with the ultimate truth or *paramarthika-*

satya on the one hand, and, as contrasted with the bare fiction or *alika* on the other, the Sunya-vadins speak of two types of *samvrti*—or two grades thereof—called *loka-samvrti* and *aloka-samvrti*. The water-seen-in-the-pool is *loka-samvrti*, the water-seen-in-the-mirage is *aloka-samvrti*. The material things normally perceived and on the basis of which the practical activities are carried on belong to the former category, while the objects experienced in dreams, illusions, etc. belong to the latter category.

From the standpoint of the Indian idealist, however, it will be a gross error to view all this as a theory of the degrees of truth or reality. It is meant instead to be a theory of the degrees of untruth and unreality. Thus, though the *aloka-samvrti* or illusion is less true or less real than the *loka-samvrti*, the latter does not contain even a grain of more truth or reality than the former. From the standpoint of the ultimate truth or *paramartha-satya*, both *loka-samvrti* and *aloka-samvrti*—i.e. both the normal waking experience and illusory experience—are unreal or false. Nevertheless, within the general structure of unreality, there is something that is all the more unreal. And that is *aloka-samvrti* or the patent illusions.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to go into greater details of all this. What is important instead is to note the way in which Nagarjuna tries to explain away the glaring inconsistency of the idealist outlook with the direct verdict of the practical life. As an idealist, he has to declare that the food one eats or the water one drinks is unreal. From the standpoint of practical life, however, such a claim is obviously absurd. Hence he says that though really unreal, these things have some kind of truth or some kind of reality, i.e. truth or reality from the purely restricted standpoint of the practical life. This truth is ultimately false of course, without realising the falsity of which one cannot reach the ultimate truth or *paramartha-satya*.

Such is the great innovation of Nagarjuna: a concept of truth which is really not true. The later idealists see in it

the only hope of saving idealism from its glaring inconsistency with practical life. In the subsequent history of Indian idealism, therefore, this distinction between the "two truths" becomes of fundamental importance. The followers of Vijnana-vada, like those of Advaita Vedanta, find it absolutely indispensable for their own philosophies. Only some terminological substitutions are made by them, apparently with the idea of giving a new look to their own brands of idealism.

The Vijnana-vadins speak of *paratantra* and *parikalpita*, as contrasted with *parinispanna*. *Parinispanna* means the ultimate truth—the truth namely that ideas and ideas alone are real. *Paratantra* is the tentative truth of practical life —the truth, for example, of the snake-seen-in-the-snake. *Parikalpita* is simply illusory, like the snake dreamt of. The Advaita Vedantists retain the term *paramartha-satya* for the ultimate truth. For the *loka-samvrti* of the Sunyavadins, they use the term *vyavaharika-satya* and instead of the *aloka-samvrti* they speak of the *pratibhasika*. Thus the *vyavaharika-satya* means the tentative truth of practical life, which is ultimately false. *Pratibhasika* means the patent illusions, like the snake seen in the rope. The *pratibhasika* is more untrue or unreal than the *vyavaharika* no doubt: but this does not mean that the *vyavaharika* is more true or more real than the *pratibhasika*.

But what, we may ask ourselves, is the real merit of this doctrine of 'two truths'? From the standpoint of philosophical idealism, its merit is very great. Without it, there is no defence for the idealist outlook, which is constantly menaced by the verdict of practical life. In their own behaviour, the idealists themselves are obliged to accept the things as real, whose reality as philosophers they want to deny. How then can they justify their own actions consistently with the view they preach? The only way left for them is to claim that the things of practical life, though ultimately unreal, have nevertheless a tentative reality restricted specifically to the context of practical life. But this context is itself a limitation which the philosophers

are supposed to outgrow. Wisdom and action do not go together. What is true from the point of view of action is true only within its own limited range. Wisdom proper is beyond it.

The Indian idealists thus keenly feel the need of a complete separation between theory and practice—between wisdom and action—for the ultimate defence of the idealist outlook. They evolve for this purpose an elaborate theory of 'truth from the standpoint of practice or action', which is of course a sham truth. It remains for us to see how the opponents of Indian idealism want to show that this talk of a 'truth which is not true' is just a verbal subterfuge designed to hoax the common people and that some of them insist on recognising practice itself as the criterion of truth. For the present our point is that the inner logic of the idealist outlook demands a complete separation between theory and practice. The theory of the *samvrti-satya* or *vyavaharika-satya* of the Indian idealists is only a way of making this separation look profound.

But the philosophical materials preserved in India enable us to see something more about all this. The very need of the total separation between theory and practice —without which there is no ultimate defence for philosophical idealism—is itself historically conditioned. It is only a reflection, in the realm of ideology, of the actual separation between theory and practice—between mental work and manual work—that takes place in real society. The idealist outlook, in other words, is not a mere whim that accidentally invades the heads of a section of Indian thinkers. It has on the contrary its own material conditions, and one of the greatest advantages of the Indian philosophical materials is that these enable us to see in some detail what these conditions actually are.

Chapter 4

SOURCES OF INDIAN IDEALISM

1. Preliminary Remarks

In an important sense, as we have seen, the perennial source of Indian idealism is a trend of speculation recorded in the Upanisads. It is by no means the only trend of Upanisadic thinking, as Samkara and his followers want us to believe. But already in the Upanisads it is the predominant trend and it has the potential of developing into a very influential philosophy of the later times.

We shall try to understand the origin of Indian idealism mainly on the basis of these texts.

2. Upanisad or Veda-end

The Upanisads are traditionally viewed as the ending portions of the Veda. The word *veda* means knowledge, though to the followers of Vedic orthodoxy it means the most infallible knowledge directly revealed. Concretely the name stands for the literary product of those people who call themselves Aryans (the nobles) and who, it is usually assumed, migrated into northern India as pastoral nomad tribes, without the art of writing but with a tremendous literary gift strangely combined with great skill in warfare. How they gradually lose their racial identity while spreading over India, settle down and move from barbarism to civilisation is a story that will interest us mainly in so far as it throws light on their ideological development.

The earlier portions of this literature consist of songs,

charms and hymns. These are composed and transmitted orally to later generations by an amazingly meticulous retentive memory—a circumstance that accounts for their name sruti, 'that which is heard'. To us these came down in the form of enormous compilations (*samhita*), a form traceable to considerable antiquity. Of these compilations, the earliest and considered most fundamental is the *Rgveda*. There are in addition three others—the *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda*.

The *Rgveda* alone contains 1028 songs in a total of 10,552 verses. Their total composition must have taken a very long period of time. For modern scholars, its inner chronology is naturally a formidable problem, which they are still groping to solve. This much is certain that some of these songs are considerably earlier than others. Any hasty generalisation about the early Vedic people based on some stray Rgvedic evidence is liable to be fallacious.

The early songs of the *Rgveda*, which often surprise us by their primitive vigour and uninhibited imagination, have for their main theme the almost complete obsession with the problems of physical survival. These express endlessly as it were the desire for food, cattle, progeny, victory, and so on. All this is mixed up with the mythological imagination of a people, who see deities in things they do not understand and which therefore fill them with awe easily passing into reverence—in the natural phenomena like the sun and wind, fire and forest, in the extraordinary, might of their war chiefs or heroes, in the intoxicating power of their drink *soma*, and so on. The deities are important for them, because they are supposed to be aids to the fulfilment of elemental desires. As people with a rudimentary control over nature, the poets see deities even in their frankly pathetic wishfulfilment like the prevention of abortion and the cure of phthisis.

People at such a stage of development are not expected to philosophise and the fact is that the genuinely earlier songs of the *Rgveda* show no predilection for philosophy. Except for some admittedly late songs in this vast collec-

tion, speculations even in a proto-philosophical sense do not have a place in the *Rgveda*, notwithstanding of course all the wild things often said about the great wisdom contained in it. As H. P. Sastri[1] says, such statements are inspired more by an ignorant veneration for the Veda than an actual acquaintance with its contents.

The next phase of Vedic literary activity can be traced to the *Yajurveda*. But it reaches its climax in colossal texts called the *Brahmana*-s. These texts are characterised by a shift of interest to discussion of the rituals or *yajna*. The rituals must have originally been something like the magic rites still to be observed among some present-day primitive peoples surviving in certain pockets of the modern world. In their original primitive context, magic rites are not irrelevant. Their essence[2] consists mainly in enacting "in fantasy the fulfilment of the desired reality. That is magic, an illusory technique supplementary to the real technique. But though illusory it is not futile." The ritual performance cannot have any direct effect on nature; but it can and does have an appreciable effect on the performers themselves. Inspired by the belief that it will bring into being the desired reality, they proceed to the task of actually bringing it into being with greater confidence and so with greater energy than before. And so it does have an effect on nature after all. "It changes their subjective attitude to reality, and so indirectly it changes reality".

In this sense of being illusory techniques intended to aid real techniques, magic rites are originally connected with *man's struggle with nature*. As discussed in the *Brahmana* texts, however, the rituals are uprooted from their original context and their function passes into its opposite. These become tools for a new technique—that of *man's struggle against man*. The point is too obvious to be missed and Eggeling, in the introduction of his English translation of the *Satapatha Brahmana*, observes:[3]

1. H. P. Sastri. *Haraprasada Racanavali* (Bengali). ii.389-97.
2. Thomson SAGS i.440ff.
3. Eggeling in SBE xii, introduction pp. ix-x.

The *Brahmana*-s, it is well known, form our chief, if not our only, source of information regarding one of the most important periods in the social and mental development of India. They represent the intellectual activity of a sacerdotal caste which ... was ever intent on deepening and extending its hold on the minds of the people, by surrounding its own vocation with the halo of sanctity and divine inspiration. A complicated ceremonial, requiring for its proper observance and consequent efficacy the ministrations of a highly trained priestly class, has ever been one of the most effective means of promoting hierarchical aspirations. Even practical Rome did not entirely succeed in steering clear of the rock of priestly ascendancy attained by such-like means... The Roman statesmen submitted to these transparent tricks rather from considerations of political expediency than from religious scruples; and the Greek Polybius might well say that 'the strange and ponderous ceremonial of Roman religion was invented solely on account of the multitude which, as reason had no power over it, required to be ruled by signs and wonders'.

The change in the content of Vedic literature transforms also its form. In the *Brahmana* texts, instead of the inspired poetry of the *Rgveda*, we have only insipid prose—in fact the dullest and the most cumbrous style that we have in Indian literature. One reason for this insipidity is the tendency to evolve symbolic interpretations of ritual trivialities, in the course of which scraps of Rgvedic verses are often quoted without their context and with strange meanings read into them.

Such trivialities, though meaningless for us, are not irrelevant, for in terms of these the authors of the *Brahmana*-s also try to validate a new social norm that emerges on the ruins of the ancient tribal one. The new norm is that of a split society in which the powers and privileges belong to the kings and nobles, though secondarily also to their ideological apologists—the priests. For the purpose of rationalising it, its essential features are sometimes projected back on the ancient Vedic mythology. Thus the group of gods called Maruts are now made to stand for the common people while despotic power is represented

by Indra and Varuna. Here are only a few examples from the *Satapatha Brahmana:*

Varuna, doubtless, is the nobility, and the Maruts are the people. He (the priest) thus makes the nobility superior to the people. And hence people here serve the Ksatriya, placed above them.[4]
He muttered that verse addressed to Indra and referring to the Maruts. Indra indeed is the nobility, and the Maruts are the people... 'They shall be controlled', he thought, and therefore that verse is addressed to Indra.[5]
Now some, on noticing any straw or piece of wood among the *soma*-plants, throw it away. But let him not do this; for —the Soma being the nobility and the other plants the common people, and the people being the nobleman's food —it would be just as if one were to take hold of and pull out some food he has put in his mouth, and throw it away.[6]

Some ritual details are sought to yield the symbolic interpretation of what "makes the Ksatra superior to the people. Hence the people here serve, from a lower position, the Ksatriya above them."[7] Similarly other ritual details are interpreted to show how "the Ksatriya, whenever he likes, says, 'Hallo Vaisya, just bring to me what thou hast stored away'. Thus he both subdues him and obtains possession of anything he wishes by dint of his very energy."[8]

Many more examples like these may easily be quoted. But that is not necessary. What is necessary is only to note that in the *Brahmana* texts there clearly emerges a new political philosophy largely as a validation of the new social conditions. We shall have to discuss this political philosophy in some details in our next chapter. For the present we shall mention it only in bare outlines, for without this we can hardly understand the new philosophy of the Upanisads.

The political philosophy is traditionally expressed in terms of the four castes: Ksatriyas (kings and nobles),

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4. *Sat. Br.* ii.5.2.6.
5. *Ib.* ii.5.2.27.
6. *Ib* iii.3.2.8.
7. *Ib.* i.3.4.15.
8. *Ib.* i.3.2.15.

Brahmins (priests and clerics), Vaisyas (merchants and farmers) and Sudras. What is meant by the last? The answer is suggested by a simple process of elimination. None of the first three classes is supposed to be responsible for the direct labour of production. Besides the three classes taken together can constitute no more than a negligible minority of the community visualised. It follows therefore that by the Sudras the texts can only mean the vast majority of the direct producers. And the *Aitareya Brahmana*[9] declares that they are some sort of subhuman beings: they are only to serve the others, they can be thrown out at will and they can be slain at pleasure.

The contempt for manual workers—and therefore for manual labour—is quite clear. The counterpart of this is the exaltation of mental work—of thought, of consciousness, of pure reason. We shall see that we have in this the clue to Upanisadic idealism.

The *Brahmana* texts are appended to the ancient compilations and to these *Brahmana*-s is appended another class of literature called the Aranyaka-s or forest texts. "These texts comprised everything which was of a secret, uncanny character, and spelt danger to the uninitiated, and which, for that reason, might only be taught and learnt in the forest, and not in the villages".[10]

With all that is supposed to be so very mysterious about the Aranyaka-s—which, incidentally, is nothing but the lingering of the belief in the magical efficacy of their themes or words—the historical importance of these texts consists in their shift of interest to speculations on proto-philosophical questions, howsoever hesitant such a first step to philosophy may be. This tendency becomes all the more prominent in the still later class of literature, the Upanisads, which in their turn are appended to the Aranyaka-s.

With the Upanisads Vedic literature comes to its end. Hence they are also called Vedanta or Veda-end. The new

9. *Ait. Br.* vii.29

10. Winternitz i.233.

social conditions, sought to be validated in the *Brahmana*-s mainly in terms of ritual trivialities, is more stabilised in the Upanisadic age. In accordance with the theoretical temper of the age, the new norm of society is given a more philosophical form:

Verily, in the beginning, this world was brahma, one only. Being one, he was not developed. He created still further a superior form, the Ksatrahood... Therefore there is nothing higher than Ksatra. Therefore at the coronation ritual, the Brahmin sits below the Ksatriya. Upon Ksatrahood alone does he confer that honour. The same thing, namely Brahminhood is the source of Ksatrahood. Therefore even if the king attains supremacy, he rests finally upon Brahminhood...

He was not yet developed. He created the commonality (*vis*)...

He was not yet developed. He created the *sudra*...

He was not yet developed. He created still further a better form, Law.

This is the power of the Ksatriya class, namely Law. Therefore there is nothing higher than the Law. So a weak man controls a strong man by Law, just as if by a king. Verily, that which is Law is Truth. Therefore they say of a man who speaks the Truth, 'He speaks the Law', or of a man who speaks the Law, 'He speaks the Truth'. Verily, both these are the same thing.[11]

Is this a way of saying that philosophy is not unconnected with political power after all? What the philosophers strive after is truth. But truth is nothing but another way of looking at the law. And it is from law that the kings and nobles derive their political power. The ruling ideas of the Upanisads are not unconnected with the ruling powers of the Upanisadic age.

It remains for us to see how the later Indian law-givers take up this Upanisadic suggestion and want to implement it on the Indian philosophical situation. That will give us some idea of the social function of Indian idealism. For the present, we are concerned with the question of its origin.

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11. *Br. Up*, i.4.11-14.

We shall first describe the general process of the growth of the Upanisadic idealism and then pass on to see it in some detail.

3. Emancipation of Consciousness

In sheer bulk Vedic literature is simply staggering. It must have taken more than a thousand years for the whole of it to be composed. What is nevertheless remarkable about it is the inner continuity of its development. It thus enables us to see how during a long period the material progress gained by successive generations of Vedic people enable them to reach a stage at which human labour is capable of producing much more than is necessary for its bare maintenance. A section of the community is thus no longer obliged to maintain itself by its own manual labour. Subsisting as it then does on the surplus produced by another section of the community, it finds leisure enough to specialise in speculative activity. Their thoughts and ideas, unlike those of their ancestors or the early Vedic poets, are no longer obsessed with the problem of physical survival only. They can move forward to construct speculative superstructure in its first real sense.

What is gained by all this is undoubtedly of the most momentous significance. It is the realisation and recognition of the power of reason or of the creative role of consciousness. Without the emancipation of consciousness from the almost total preoccupation with the problem of survival, there is no beginning of theoretical activity in its full sense. In the *Rgveda* we come across poets and seers who are inspired only by the vision of the fulfilment of elemental desires. Their consciousness is engrossed with the problem of the struggle with nature and they do not have the leisure to philosophise. In the vast *Brahmana* literature we have indeed a glimpse of the emerging leisured class. But it is engrossed with the problem of the stabilisation of the political power of kings and their ideological apologists—with what is called 'applied politics, or the

practice of controlling men by fear'.[12] The relative emancipation of consciousness of the leisured class is peculiarly consumed by this. The kind of intellectual atmosphere indicated by the texts is not the one in which the philosopher is encouraged to come to the fore. In the *Brahmana*-s we see priests rambling in the graveyard of primitive rituals; but we do not yet see the philosopher. The picture of the philosopher first emerges in the Upanisads, when the leisured class fully stabilises its own power and can afford to have the serenity and tranquillity of unruffled contemplation. The first philosophers of the Upanisads raise questions of immense theoretical significance and they earnestly seek answer to them.

At the same time, this progress—great though it is—also creates a very grave danger for thought, particularly in the view of those who visualise an ideal society in which the manual workers are shorn of all prestige and privilege. The tools and techniques by which nature is interrogated belong to these direct producers. But they recede to the background, and along with them the growing stock of their experience and understanding. Philosophical activity, in so far as it is cut off from all these, easily tends to lose the spirit of interrogating nature. The result is much worse than contempt for the physical sciences. It is the creation of an illusion, resulting from the coercion of consciousness to a peculiar process of introversion. Knowledge is no longer intended to be the knowledge of objects. It wants to be knowledge of the subject itself—of the bare ego or of the pure self. As the Upanisadic idealists put it, the ideal of the philosopher is *atmaratiratmakrda*—'the libido fixed on the self, sporting with the self'.[13] Extreme introversion, we are told, brings into operation a delusion of grandeur. It is the delusion of the omnipotence of the bare ego. This ego, this self, wants to dictate terms to reality and demands to be recognised as the only reality. 'I am that ultimate reality'—declares the Upanisadic idealist. The result is

12. Farrington GS 27.

13. *Ch. Up.* vii.25.2.

lofty contempt for the material world, in which the philosopher himself has his being.

All this is putting the point in the terminologies of the psychologist. But that does not mean that we are trying to understand here the psychology of the Upanisadic idealists. If we are interested in their mental history, it is because it enables us to understand how the new world in which they live accounts for the fundamentals of their new world-outlook. In their political philosophy, the active intercourse with nature is only the forced labour of the sudra-s, whose very contact is polluting. The philosopher takes pride in disowning the spirit of interrogating nature and is hence under no obligation to admit its reality.

Thus cut off from active intercourse with nature, the philosopher's consciousness runs the risk of imagining that it can rise to ever higher and ever more remote conditions where only thought remains and the things thought of fade out. This is the cult of pure reason, i.e. of reason only as a faculty of illusion. Consciousness, estranged from concrete living, becomes a form of sick consciousness. It is no longer *consciousness of something* but *something like consciousness-in-itself*—just consciousness, sheer consciousness—not the consciousness of the real men and women engaged in the active intercourse with nature and getting progressively enriched by this intercourse. Consciousness is now viewed as a 'deified absolute'—too mysterious to be grasped by mundane thought and too awesome to be described in ordinary language.

Not that the emancipation of consciousness has such a necessary fate. We shall later see that there are thinkers in Upanisadic India who do not share this line of thinking. There are even those who, instead of taking a deified view of consciousness, want to understand it in the sober scientific sense. They are the pioneers of the scientific tradition in Indian philosophy. We shall have to investigate into the possible causes that save their consciousness from developing into the morbid consciousness of their idealist colleagues.

In Upanisadic India, however, their prestige is already on the decline[14] and there is a growing contempt for whatever may be considered as positive science of the age. In the new intellectual atmosphere, those whose glory is specially boosted are philosophers for whom consciousness, fully alienated from actual life, wants to oppose and undermine life.

Such a philosopher is the great Yajnavalkya who declares that reality is just a mass of consciousness (*vijnanaghana*). It can neither be grasped by the normal organs of knowledge nor described in normal language. The only way of talking about it is to say, 'It is not this, It is not this'. While dreaming and further falling into the state of dreamless sleep, one gets progressively emancipated from the fetters of the material world and thus has a taste of this reality.

This is how the idealist outlook is first foreshadowed in Indian philosophy. But, as we shall presently see, it could hardly make any sense to the early Vedic poets, not merely because they are comparatively ignorant and do not know how to philosophise but because they are much too committed to the active relation with nature to afford such gambols of pure consciousness.

Thus for the understanding of the general history of ideological development, Vedic literature has great importance. It is a vast literature with an inner continuity of development, showing the speculative consciousness not only in its making but also in its eventual culmination in the cult of pure consciousness, the outcome of which is the idealist outlook.

An adequate survey of Vedic literature from this point of view forms the subject of an independent study. We have the scope here to note only a few salient points rele-

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14. The most outstanding philosopher representing this line of thought is Uddalaka Aruni of *Ch. Up.* vi. We shall later quote legends about him scattered in the different Upanisads showing how diffident he feels before the breath-taking flights of pure reason patronised by the kings and nobles of the age.

vant for understanding the emergence of the idealist outlook.

4. Cult of "Secret Wisdom"

In the apparent chaos of the philosophical tendencies of the Upanisads, the more outstanding features with which the idealist outlook announces itself are on the whole clear. We have a clue to these in the name chosen for the texts.

The word *upanisad*—as suggested by its etymology and corroborated by its synonym *rahasyam*—means 'secret knowledge' or 'secret wisdom'. It is secret, because only the fortunate few of the age are supposed to be its custodians. At the same time, this knowledge is considered supremely important, because it is believed to have a marvellous potency of its own.

All this gives us some idea of the distinctive peculiarity of the Upanisads. Their main theme is knowledge, but not knowledge in the ordinary sense. It is knowledge restricted to a few of the community and is moreover believed to have a mysterious power of its own.

In Vedic literature this is something new. The traditional way of admitting this is to describe the Upanisad as a new offshoot of Vedic literature representing its 'knowledge branch' or *jnana-kanda*. The concept of knowledge acquires in the Upanisads an altogether new and somewhat fabulous significance:

Knowledge—not much learning, but the understanding of metaphysical truths—was the impelling motive of the thinkers of the Upanisads . . . Knowledge was the one object of supreme value, the irresistible means of obtaining one's ends. The idea of the worth and efficacy of knowledge is expressed again and again throughout the Upanisads not only in connection with philosophical speculation, but also in the practical affairs in life . . . So frequent are the statements describing the invulnerability and omnipotence of him who is possessed of this magic talisman, that *ya evem*

veda—'he who knows this'—becomes the most frequently recurring phrase in all the Upanisads.[15]

But this emphasis on the power of knowledge must not be misunderstood. It is not what Bacon means when he says that 'the improvement of man's mind and the improvement of his lot are one and the same thing'. Knowledge which is so much valued in the Upanisads is not at all intended to be a better insight into nature, serving as the basis of a better mastery over it. It is not supposed to be a guide to any course of action leading to some desired result. What is believed is that knowledge by itself fulfils all desires—i.e. fulfils these immediately, directly and automatically. How are we to understand such a belief?

There is only one answer to this. The belief is essentially magical. The typical Upanisadic way of expressing this magical belief is: "One who knows this reaches a full length of life, lives long, becomes great in offspring, great in cattle, great in fame." In so far as this is a belief in magic, there is nothing new about it in the Vedic tradition. The belief is overwhelmingly obvious in the *Atharvaveda* and *Yajurveda:* it assumes the most grotesque form in the *Brahmana*-s. As appended to the *Brahmana*-s, the Upanisads do not outgrow the belief in magic. This is already discussed by Edgerton[16] in his remarkable paper *Upanisads: What do they seek and why?*

What Edgerton does not discuss, however, is another important point. In spite of the lingering of the magical belief in the Upanisads, there is also something strikingly new about these texts. In the earlier strata of Vedic literature, the concept of metaphysical wisdom is itself absent. Hence there is no question of viewing it as possessing magical potency. In the early Vedic age, in other words, the belief in the potency of magic is there. But it is the belief in the magical potency of ritual acts. In the Upanisads, the belief is clearly displaced. It is now the belief in the

15. T. E. Hume TPU intro. 58-9.
16. JAOS, 1929. 97ff.

magical efficacy of secret wisdom, from which this literature receives its name.

If the persistence of magical belief indicates that the Upanisadic thinkers have not fully outgrown their ancestral convictions, the displacement of the belief to secret wisdom shows the new theoretical temper of the age. What is decisive about the Upanisads is this fetish of secret wisdom. In it is absorbed whatever still survives of the earlier ideas and attitudes. In the altered conditions in which they live, the Upanisadic thinkers find the mere stock of their ancestral convictions inadequate for their own purposes, howsoever otherwise strong the hangover of these may be. Thus, though in a number of passages great veneration is expressed for the ancient compilations or *samhita*-s, other passages of the Upanisads state in so many words that the mere knowledge of the *samhita*-s is not enough for the new pursuit of metaphysical wisdom. An example of the latter is the famous story of Narada and Sanatkumara. Narada approaches the latter and declares that in the stock of knowledge he already possesses are included the *Rgveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Apparently dissatisfied with all this, he wants to be initiated into the secret wisdom of Sanatkumara. And the first thing that the philosopher tells him is that all these branches of knowledge—inclusive of the knowledge of the four ancient compilations—are 'mere names' (*namam*): these have no more value than a merely nominal one.

5. Philosophy and Nobility

Who is this Vedic philosopher that has the audacity to declare that even the *Rgveda* etc are mere names? We do not know the exact answer. Keith says that he is just a mythical sage of the Upanisads.[17] But that is too vague. The Upanisad that tells the story of Sanatkumara

17. A. B. Keith VI ii.422; RPVU 495.

declares, "People call him Skanda—yea, they call him Skanda."[18] In Indian mythology Skanda is the god of war. Does then Sanatkumara belong to the class of the warrior nobles? Does the Upanisad want us to connect the new nobility with the new theoretical temper of the age?

The evidence of Sanatkumara may by itself be too thin to prove such a possibility. But the possibility is there and it cannot be easily dismissed. Many other legends of the Upanisads suggest it. Keith[19] sums these up as follows:

In the *Chandogya Upanisad* (v.11-24) five learned Brahmins desire to learn from Uddalaka Aruni the nature of the Atman Vaisvanara; he doubts his ability to explain it, and as a result all six betake themselves to the king Asvapati Kaikeya, who gives them instruction, after first demonstrating the inaccuracy of their knowledge. In a narrative which is preserved in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* (ii.1) and the *Kausitaki Upanisad* (iv) a scholar, Garga Balaki, undertakes to set out the nature of the *brahman* to the king Ajatasatru of Kasi: he propounds twelve views—or in the *Kausitaki* sixteen—which are all defective, and the king then explains the Atman to him by the principle of deep sleep, prefacing his instruction by the observation that it is a reverse of the rule for a Brahmin to betake himself to a Ksatriya for instruction. Another legend in the *Chandogya* (i.8-9) shows the Brahmins being instructed in the nature of ether, as the ultimate basis of all things, by the king Pravahana Jaivali . . . Less important is the fact that the Brahmin Narada is represented in the *Chandogya* as being the recipient of information from Sanatkumara, later the god of war, who tells the former that all this Vedic lore is mere name. The great text regarding the doctrine of transmigration is set out by Pravahana Jaivali to Aruni with the remark that the Brahmins have never before had this information, which so far had remained the monopoly of the Ksatriyas. In a third version of this account, given in the *Kausitaki Upanisad,* the king is Citra Gangyayani.

What do all these legends imply? Keith is inclined to

18. *Ch. Up.* vii.26.2. 19. A. B. Keith RPVU 493.

view these as 'delicate and effective piece of flattery,'[20] i.e. of the kings by the priests who compile the Upanisads. This is taking a rather casual view of the Upanisadic material. The other way of misunderstanding the same is to take the Upanisadic legends at their face value. This is done by those who argue that the Upanisadic philosophy is the creation of the Ksatriya caste. However even assuming that the legends are to be taken seriously, the fact remains that except perhaps the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul[21] the theoretical innovations attributed to the kings and nobles are on the whole secondary in importance. Compared to these, the speculative constructions attributed to a thinker like Yajnavalkya is much more imposing. But Yajnavalkya is a priest and not a noble. This easily disproves the theory of the Ksatriya origin of the Upanisadic philosophy in the sense in which it is usually put. But it proves nothing against the fact connecting the nobility with the new philosophy, for without the patronage of the nobles even Yajnavalkya cannot philosophise. The point is not how much the kings and nobles directly contribute to the philosophical activity of the age. The point rather is that without their political and financial support the Upanisadic idealism is not adequately explained. This is best illustrated by the case of Yajnavalkya.

6. Material Requirements of an Idealist

Secret wisdom of the age, as we have seen, is imagined to have the most wonderful power of its own. The power is so great that it promises not merely the worldly things like cattle, offspring and fame; it can even assure something which nothing else can.

In an oft-quoted legend of the Upanisad, Yajnavalkya—

20. A. B. Keith VI i.206.

21. The Upanisads consistently assert that this doctrine is the characteristic contribution of the nobles to the Upanisadic philosophy. *Ch. Up.* v.3; *Br. Up.* vi.2; *Kaus. Up.* i.

about to retire—wants to have his property settled among his two wives, called Katyayani and Maitreyi.

Then said Maitreyi, 'If now, Sir, the whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal thereby?'

'No', said Yajnavalkya, 'as the life of the rich, even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth.'

Then said Maitreyi, 'What should I do with that through which I may not be immortal? What you know, Sir, that indeed tell me.'[22]

This delights the philosopher and he initiates the wife into the secret knowledge he possesses.

The importance of this story for illustrating the new attitude of the Upanisadic philosopher is often emphasised. That is rightly done. A considerable number of other passages of the Upanisads assert that the secret wisdom of the age promises immortality.[23] But Yajnavalkya's story is to be understood in full.

The word for immortal used in it is *amrta.* The early poets of the *Rgveda* are aware of the word no doubt. But they use it rhetorically, usually to describe euphoria induced by their intoxicating *soma.*[24] But the idea of 'secret wisdom' leading to immortality never occurs to them, nor the idea of 'property settlement' in the Upanisadic sense. The reasons for this are quite simple. They do not have property as Yajnavalkya does[25] and hence no opportunity to cultivate the cult of secret wisdom.

We shall presently see from where this property of the philosopher comes. But whatever its source, it obviously relieves him of the problem of maintaining himself by his own manual labour. How can he, without being thus relieved, devote himself to the cult of pure consciousness? The basic requirement for this is leisure enough for the

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22. *Br. Up.* iv.5.3-4

23. *Isa Up.* 11; *Mait. Up.* vii.9; *Ait. Up.* iv.6; v.4; *Kaus. Up.* ii.14; *Kena Up.* 12; *Ch. Up.* i.4.5; etc.

24. *Rv* i.43.9; i.84.4; viii.48.12; ix.3.1; etc.

25. The songs in praise of gifts (*dana-stuti*-s) are very late and do not prove vastly propertied class in early Vedic period.

purpose. The contempt for the verdict of practice, on which the idealist outlook so vitally depends throughout its Indian career, can be possible for the philosopher only in so far as he is relieved of the basic responsibility of practical life—in short, in so far as he is ensured of the leisured class existence.

By contrast the material conditions in which the early Vedic poets live do not permit them all this. With their control over nature comparatively rudimentary, they cannot but be obsessed with the problem of physical survival—a problem which is solved in ancient society mainly by collective functioning. The devotion of a selected few of the community to the cultivation of pure speculation is not yet objectively possible, for the community does not produce enough surplus to meet their material requirements. In the earlier strata of the *Rgveda,* songs ennobling the collective labour of the community are in fact innumerable. I have elsewhere quoted some of them.[26]

In the Upanisadic India—i.e. in the newly-developed states of the Indo-Gangetic plain of about eighth and seventh century BC—things are different. There is considerable progress in the control over nature, thanks mainly to the introduction of iron implements on some scale and the improved technique of agriculture and handicrafts, which are now added to cattle-raising. Human labour acquires the ability to produce much more than is necessary for its bare maintenance. At the same time, the products of labour do not go to the labourers themselves, or, as the early Vedic poets put it, 'shared out' among the tribesmen. In fact, this activity of sharing out is so important to these early poets that in their mythological imagination it is raised to the status of veritable deities. They call these deities Bhaga and Amsa, literally 'the share'.[27] In the Upanisadic India, however, society is split into a ruling class and a toiling class. The former consisting mainly of the kings and nobles usurp the surplus produced by the

26. Chattopadhyaya L Ch. 8. 27. *Ib.* 565ff.

latter. An early Indian law-giver wants to rationalise this accomplished fact. Describing the ideal mode of living of the king or noble, he says:

"But to the collection of these taxes he shall always pay particular attention. He shall live on the surplus."[28]

The accumulation of this surplus makes them enormously wealthy in terms of the age. Depending on this surplus to maintain themselves on a grand scale, they have all the leisure of life to pursue and patronise the cult of pure consciousness. The kings surrounded by their flatterers (*rajanya bandhu*) are often described by the Upanisads as taking very keen interest in philosophical discourses. But this does not mean that they have the monopoly of the 'secret wisdom'. Outside the circle of the nobility, there are persons with exceptional gifts claiming profounder wisdom endowed with more imposing power.

Such a person is the famous Yajnavalkya.

Attracted by the magical potency of his wisdom—and above all perhaps by the rumour that this wisdom ensures even immortality or an escape from death—one of the prosperous kings of the age, Janaka of Videha, is only too eager to part with a substantial portion of his own fortune to the philosopher as payment for being initiated into his secret wisdom. Without being a direct plunderer of the surplus, Yajnavalkya becomes entitled to a part thereof.

Nothing is more attractive for the kings than the prospect of overcoming death or attaining immortality. It is basically the same temptation that leads the Pharaohs of Egypt to waste colossal amount of wealth to build pyramids. Compared to them, the kings of the petty Upanisadic states have less wealth. But that is not the point. The point is that for these kings also the temptation of overcoming death is irresistible. They pay for it according to their means.

All this does not mean that for Yajnavalkya and his co-philosophers the promise of immortality ensured by their

28. *Gautama DS* x. 29-30.

secret wisdom is necessarily a sales talk. It may as well be a part of their make-belief. But whether make-belief or not, it does pay. And because it pays, it can relieve the philosopher of the problem of maintaining himself by his own labour. It even enables Yajnavalkya to amass considerable property which he wants to settle before retirement. For him it is quite logical to tell the wife that this property does not ensure immortality; that immortality is ensured only by his secret wisdom. Why else should his patron agree to pay him so well for being initiated into the secret wisdom? However what he does not add is that though this property does not ensure immortality it can and does ensure leisure for cultivating the cult of pure wisdom. Without the solid support of the material wealth —the grand gift of his patron—the alternative for him is working for a living. With the life of manual labour, his philosophy of pure contemplation does not fit. From this point of view, his worldly assets are not so unconnected with his world-denying philosophy as he wants his wife to believe.

Thus for understanding Yajnavalkya and his philosophy it is necessary to take note of his property and understand its sources. Where does it come from? The Upanisads are not at all vague about it. Here is a typical description of the general setting of his philosophical discourse:[29]

Janaka, king of Videha, was seated.
Yajnavalkya came up.
To him the king said, 'Yajnavalkya, what brings you here? Is it because you want cattle or hair-splitting discussions?'
'Indeed both, your majesty', he said.

We shall presently see why in Upanisadic days material wealth is largely measured by cattle. Thus this great idealist philosopher, with his intense contempt for the material world, shows no hesitation to admit that he is not interested merely in philosophy; he is also interested

29. *Br. Up.* iv.1.1.

in the payment for it. Metaphysically the cattle—like everything else in the world—are unreal no doubt. But these are not to be ignored, for without these the metaphysician is not assured of his leisured-class existence that enables him to spin the world-denying philosophy.

Yajnavalkya is thus confronted here with a question much more serious than that of mere theoretical consistency. It is too early for the Indian idealists to invent the philosophical trick of distinguishing between the purely provisional truth of practical life (*vyavaharika* or *samvrti satya*) and truth in its highest metaphysical sense (*paramarthika satya*). Yajnavalkya does not say that the cattle, though ultimately unreal, are real for practical life only. Compared to the later idealists, he is naive enough to admit that he is interested in cattle too, whatever may be their ultimate metaphysical status. How indeed can he be fully earnest about hair-splitting discussions without being provided with the material means for the purpose? Belonging as he does not to the class of plunderers of the surplus produced by the direct producers, he has to depend on a part of the plundered surplus which he expects to receive from the king. And the king in his turn is only eager enough to offer him the material wealth he needs, for his wisdom promises even immortality. At the end of each of his discourses on philosophy, the king offers him the gift of a thousand cows and a bull as big as an elephant—a very considerable amount of wealth for Upanisadic age.

At the end of the final discourse Yajnavalkya declares, 'Verily, Janaka, you have reached fearlessness'. Janaka, king of Videha, says, 'My fearlessness comes unto you, noble sir, you who make us know fearlessness. Adoration to you! Here are the Videhas; here am I at your service.'[30]

Fearlessness means here the fearlessness of death. Before passing on to see how Yajnavalkya's philosophy of

30. *Ib.* iv.2.4.

pure spirit creates such an assurance for the king, let us try to be clearer about Yajnavalkya's awareness—though in his own way—of the material basis of this idealist philosophy.

If Yajnavalkya is the greatest idealist philosopher of the Upanisads, he is also the most money-minded thinker of the age. Elsewhere he comes out with the rather startling admission that he has respect for metaphysicians interested in the ultimate reality, what he is interested over and above is the possession of cows. As he puts it, "Reverence be to him who is most learned in sacred writ! We are but hankering after cows."[31]

The legend in which this occurs brings us back to the same setting of philosophical discussion that we have just noted. Janaka, king of Videha, gets a sacrifice performed and lavishes gifts on the priests performing it. A large number of them are naturally attracted to his assembly. The king wants to find out who among these priests possesses the highest wisdom. So he has a thousand cows enclosed in a place, with ten pieces of gold tied to the horns of each. And he declares that the wisest of the priests is to take these away. While the other priests hesitate, Yajnavalkya asks his pupil to take them away on his behalf. This enrages the other priests. How is it that Yajnavalkya takes it for granted that he is wisest among them all? To this the philosopher comes out with the statement just quoted. He has respect for metaphysics; but he is also aware of the need of material wealth.

But the other priests want him to prove his philosophical superiority. So they start questioning him. Significantly their first question is whether he knows the secret to immortality: "Since everything here is coextensive with death—everything is overpowered by death—how can the sacrificer (i.e. the royal donor) move beyand death?"[32]

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31. *Sat. Br.* xi.6.3.2; *Br. Up.* iii.1.2.
32. *Br. Up.* iii.1.3.

The Upanisad wants us to believe that Yajnavalkya alone knows the answer to this. But what is the answer? The metaphysical discourse attributed to him is a long one. Its main point is the gradual unfolding of the idealist outlook. But how is this outlook supposed to overcome death and ensure immortality? There is only one way of doing this and that is to remove from the realm of reality the physical world as a whole, and along with this the physical facts of birth and death. As Yajnavalka argues, the soul, which is pure consciousness and bliss, is the only reality. Being completely uncontaminated by anything material, it is by nature aloof from what appears to mortal eyes as birth and death. This death, like birth, is completely unreal. How can one who knows this be any longer haunted by the fear of death?

This is not ensuring oneself against the fact of death, before which the philosopher is as helpless as any other mortal. But it is a way of inducing a subjective change in oneself which helps one to overcome—though only in ideas and imagination—the sense of death and the terrors thereof.

Significantly, being conscious in his own way of the material basis of his idealism, Yajnavalkya never forgets his patron while talking of immortality. He declares that the immortality he is talking of is to be attained not only by the metaphysician who knows that ultimate reality to be pure spirit but also by his patron on whose gifts the metaphysician subsists:[33]

When born, indeed, he (the spirit) is not born,
Who would again beget him?
Reality is pure consciousness and pure bliss.
It is the goal reached by the donors of wealth,
As well as by those who are firmly established on the knowledge of this.

At least one point of this declaration is striking and it needs some discussion. The donor and the philosopher

33. *Ib.* iii.9.28.

reach the same goal. What needs to be added, however, is that they reach it in different ways. The philosopher creates for the donor the illusion of immortality. The donor creates for the philosopher the material conditions for this illusion-making.

These conditions are in short the conditions of social parasitism. It kills the philosopher's spirit of interrogating nature, coerces his consciousness to total introversion and makes him a philosopher of pure spirit, for which death is as meaningless as birth.

For our understanding of the sources of idealism, this parasitism of the philosopher is of crucial importance. One way of judging it is to have some concrete idea of the philosopher's material assets. We begin with some clues to them as preserved in the Upanisads.

In the account of the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* just quoted, Yajnavalkya's pupil drives away for him one thousand cows, with ten *pada*-s of gold tied to the horns of each. In the next account of the same Upanisad, king Janaka—awed by Yajnavalkya's breath-taking flights of pure reason—four times offers him 'a thousand cows and a bull as large as an elephant'.[34] This is followed by another account of the same text in which the same philosopher receives from the same donor for the same reason five thousand cows, in instalments of one thousand each.[35] Then follows the event already referred to—the philosopher wants to settle his property on his two wives, Katyayani and Maitreyi.

The logical sequence followed by the text is not to be overlooked. It tells us of the need felt by the philosopher for a property settlement only after describing the process of its accumulation.

Let us try to be clearer about the property accumulated. Not to speak of other accounts. the three that we have just mentioned tell us of a total of ten thousand cows, besides

34. *Ib.* iv.1.13; iv.1.5; iv.1.6; iv.1.7.
35. *Ib.* iv.3.14; iv.3.15; iv.3.16; iv.3.33; iv.4.7.

the ten thousand *pada*-s of gold. But this is only elementary arithmetic, and lest we are misled by it the Upanisad tells us also of the bulls as big as elephants. The cows accumulated by the priest-philosopher also multiply. We have in another Upanisad a rough calculation of the rate of this multiplication. Satyakama Jabala goes to Haridrumata Gautama, desiring to be a student of sacred knowledge.

After having received him as a pupil, he (the priest-philosopher) separated out four hundred lean, weak cows and said, 'Follow these, my dear.'

As he was driving them on, he said, 'I may not return without a thousand.'

So he lived away a number of years. When the number reached a thousand, the bull spoke to him, saying: 'Satyakama!'

'Sir', he replied.

'We have reached a thousand, my dear. Bring us to the teacher's home.'[36]

If this rate of increase satisfies the Upanisadic calculation in one case, there is no reason why it should not be applicable to another. The ten thousand cows received by Yajnavalkya only according to three accounts of the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* are soon supposed to multiply into twentyfive thousand. It does not take much time again for the twentyfive thousand to multiply into 62,500. And so on.

All this is talking too much of cows no doubt. Why do the Upanisads do it? Keith answers, "It is clear that cattle, not land, was the real foundation of wealth, just as in Ireland, Italy (cf. *pecunia*), Greece, etc. Cattle could be, and were, used individually, but land was not open to a man's free disposal; no doubt, at any rate, the consent of the family or of the community might be required."[37]

Thus assuming that the Upanisad does not want us to look at the priest-philosopher as a member of landed

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36. *Ch. Up.* iv.4.5-iv.5.1. 37. *Keith VI* i.100.

aristocracy, there is no doubt that it wants us to look at him as an extremely wealthy person—a real aristocrat of the age. Besides, the question of land is not to be totally dismissed, for there is the physical problem of accommodating the cattle. How does the priest-philosopher solve this problem?

Whatever may be the system of land tenure in Upanisadic India, there are in these texts unmistakable accounts of the gift of villages by the kings and nobles to the custodians of secret wisdom.[38] We read of this more explicitly in the Pali canonical literature of the Buddhists, which give us an idea of the social conditions not much later than that of the Upanisads.

> The barhmin villages or settlements were mainly in the Magadhan and Kosalan regions... The reason for the presence of the brahmin *gama*-s in these two regions is likely to be found in the early development of *brahmadeyya* land ownership in these areas. *Brahmadeyya* was the royal gift of land or an estate to well known brahmins and others, for the services, probably ritual in nature, which they rendered to the king. Some of the *brahmadeyya* lands are specially described as brahmin *gama*-s. Khanumata and Opasada, which are given respectively by kings Pasenadi and Bimbisara to the brahmin Kutadanta and Canki are thus described. On the other hand, Campa, Ukkattha and Salavatika, although these places belong to the brahmin Sonadanda, Pokkharasadi and Lohicca respectively, are known only as *brahmadeyya* lands... In Ekanala, the farmer Bharadvaja-brahmin has so much land that he needs 500 phoughshares to plough it.[39]

We do not read in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* of any royal gift of village to Yajnavalkya. But the presumption is that he has some villages or at least pens vast enough to accommodate his ever-multiplying thousands of cows. If so, the further presumption is that there is also need for him to have proper security arrangement for such an enormous amount of wealth.

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38. *Ch. Up.* iv.2.4; cf. *Kaus. Up.* ii.1 & ii.2.
39. Wagle 18-9.

This leads us to the description of the prosperous Brahmin given by the Buddha—the Brahmins who "have themselves guarded in fortified towns, with moats dug out round them and cross-bars let down before the gates, by men girt with long swords."[40]

The picture of the parasitism of the priest-philosopher is not difficult to reconstruct. It is in this parasitism that we have the clue to his world-denying idealism.

The Buddha is himself inclined to look at these new parasites—the prosperous Brahmins of his age—as a fall from the simple moral grandeur of the ancient Vedic poets. He asks one of them:[41]

But just so, Ambattha, those ancient poets (or seers)... the authors of the verses...whose ancient form of words so chanted, uttered or composed, the Brahmins of today chant over again and rehearse,... that you should on that account be a seer or have attained to the state of a seer...? Now, what think you Ambattha? What have you heard when Brahmins old and well stricken in years, teachers of yours or their teachers, were talking together—did these ancient poets, whose verses you chant over and repeat, parade about, well groomed, perfumed, trimmed as to their hair and beard, adorned with garlands and gems, clad in white garments, in the full possession and enjoyment of the five pleasures of sense, as you and your teacher too do now?

The Buddha is evidently transforming the reality of the rudimentary control over nature of the ancient Vedic poets into a romantic picture of their great asceticism. The primitive poets are really not so ascetic as he wants us to think. At the same time, where the Buddha is unquestionably correct is that these ancient poets live a life quite different from the parasitical one of their later champions. As a result, the philosophy of the pure spirit of the Upanisadic idealists can hardly make any sense to them.

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40. *Ambattha-sutta* Tr. Rhys Davids DB ii.130.
41. *Ib.* Rhys Davids DB ii. 129.

We shall have a brief note on the general theoretical temper of these ancient poets and then pass on to see why this is so different from that of the Upanisadic idealists.

7. Primitive Proto-Materialism of Ancient Vedic Period

Among the later Indian philosophers those who want to take their stand exclusively on Upanisadic idealism are the Advaita Vedantists. According to them, an appropriate descriptive epithet of their philosophy is Sarirakamimamsa or Sariraka philosophy. *Sariraka* means the body that is filthy.[42] Upanisadic idealism is given such a name because it is the philosophy of the pure spirit or soul which, much to the annoyance of the idealists, remains imprisoned as it were in the defiled body.

The underlying idea is strongly reminiscent of the ancient Greek idealist, Plato, who—disgusted with the body as a prison for the soul—goes to the extent of describing the desire for death as the right mood of the philosopher. A few centuries before Plato, Yajnavalkya also gives an enviable description of a dying man who, while dying, gets released from the fetters of the defiled body and the deceptions of the sense-organs. It is tempting to quote here a few lines from these two eminent ancient idealists and see how intense a contempt for the body is characteristic of the ancient idealist outlook. Argues Plato:[43]

As long as we are encumbered with the body, and our soul is contaminated with such an evil, we can never fully attain to what we desire; and this, we say, is truth. For the body subjects us to innumerable hindrances on account of its necessary support... and it fills us with longings, desires, fears, all kind of fancies, and a multitude of absurdities, so that, as it is said in real truth, by reason

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42. The word *sariraka* is derived from the word *sarira* or body by adding to it the suffix *kan* which gives a sense of derogation.

43. Plato *Phaedo* 66. Tr. Cary (Everyman's Library).

of the body it is never possible for us to make any advances in wisdom... It has then in reality been demonstrated that if we are ever to know anything purely, we must be separated from the body, and contemplate the things themselves by mere soul. And then, as it seems, we shall obtain that which we desire, and which we profess ourselves to be lovers of—namely wisdom—when we are dead, as reason shows, but not while we are alive. For if it is not possible to know anything purely in conjunction with the body, one of these two things must follow: either that we can never acquire knowledge, or only after we are dead, for then the soul will subsist apart by itself, separate from the body, but not before.

Such is the *sariraka* philosophy of ancient Greece. The way in which Yajnavalkya puts it is to give an enviable description of a dying man—enviable, because while dying, he is getting progressively relieved from the fetters of the body:[44]

He is becoming one, they say, he does not see.
He is becoming one, they say, he does not smell.
He is becoming one, they say, he does not taste.
He is becoming one, they say, he does not speak.
He is becoming one, they say, he does not hear.
He is becoming one, they say, he does not think.
He is becoming one, they say, he does not touch.
He is becoming one, they say, he does not know.
The point of his heart becomes lighted up. By that light the self departs, either by the eye, or by the head, or by other bodily parts. After him, as he goes out, the life goes out. After the life, as it goes out, all the breaths go out. He becomes one with intelligence...

This, in short, is an important feature of the ancient philosophy of the pure spirit. It is a philosophy of the most intense contempt for the body, so much so that it goes to the extent of glorifying death as by far the greatest bliss conceivable. Paradoxically, this cult of death is also made to pass as the philosophy ensuring immortality. This combination of the opposites is possible, because in the philosophy of pure spirit birth is as fictitious as death.

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44. *Br. Up.* iv.42.

For understanding the development of Vedic thought, however, it is necessary to note that a philosophical view like this would have gone completely over the heads of the early Vedic poets, who feel that nothing is more important than nourishing the body with food and drink. The feeling is so intense that they are led even to conceive food—called *pitu*—as one of their deities. The way in which they praise this deity, though primitive, is also quite refreshing, particularly when we return to it after the morbid speculations on the desirability of death. We quote in rough rendering a part of the song in praise of food from the *Rgveda*:[45]

Savoury food, honeyed food, we welcome thee; be our protector. Come to us, beneficial food, we welcome thee; be our protector Come to us, beneficial food,—a source of delight. a friend of the well-respected, and having no enemy. Your flavours, oh food, are diffused through regions, as the winds are spreading through the sky. These men, oh food, who are your distributors,—oh most sweet food—they who are the eaterers of thee and thy juices, increase like you with elongated necks. The minds of the mighty deities, oh food, are fixed upon thee... Oh food, the wealth which is associated with the mountains went to thee. Oh sweet one, listen to us and be accessible to our eating. And since we enjoy the abundance of the waters and plants, therefore oh body may you grow fat. And since we enjoy the drink *soma*, thy mixture with boiled milk and boiled barley, therefore oh body may you grow fat...

Specially striking is the last refrain: *vatape piva it bhava*, 'Oh body, may you grow fat.'

This is not a philosophical view of course, nor is it meant to be one. But its evidence is not to be overlooked. It does represent a theoretical temper which is fully opposed to the *sariraka* philosophy, and which, rather than being exceptional, is really typical of the ancient songs of the *Rgveda*.

It is tempting to raise here another question.

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45. *Rv* i.187.

In later Indian philosophy, the most outspoken materialists are called the Lokayatas or Carvakas, according to whom there is nothing called the soul over and above the body. They are despised in various ways. One of these is to say that the very name Carvaka is indicative of the vulgarity of the philosophy. It is supposed to be derived from the root *charv*, meaning to eat or to chew. These philosophers are called the Carvakas because—unaware of any lofty ideal—they care only for eating and drinking.

Such an etymology of the name is probably fanciful. But even admitting it, we cannot escape a simple question. Which of the later philosophical views—the Carvaka and the Sariraka—suits the general theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets? There is only one answer—for the poets go into ecstasy over food for the solid reason that it makes the body fat. It is possible to imagine the ancient poets understanding the Carvaka philosophy but not the Sariraka. This is one of the reasons why I have elsewhere[46] tried to describe the ancient Vedic thought as indicative of primitive proto-materialism. It is on the ruins of this that later emerges the idealistic outlook.

8. Primordial Unity of Wisdom and Action

Now there remains only one other point to discuss. What is it that accounts for the difference in the theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets from that of the Upanisadic idealists?

Compared to the Upanisadic philosophers, the Rgvedic poets are ignorant people no doubt. Their stock of ideas is very poor; their capacity for conceptual construction is so limited that they can only imagine deities in things that they do not understand. The significance of evidence and reasoning for answering questions concerning truth and reality is something beyond their mental horizon. Indeed they are not even properly aware of such ques-

46. Chattopadhyaya L Ch. 8.

tions, not to speak of answering them. The Upanisadic philosophers are far ahead of them. For them these questions acquire great importance and they try to answer them on the strength of evidences and arguments, rudimentary though these are.

All these are quite on the surface. But these do not answer the question we raised. It is not the question concerning the *richness* of thought but rather of its *general direction*. The want of richness of early Vedic thought compared to the Upanisadic one is easily understood. But the point is that in the Upanisadic idealism, we see not only a progress of thought but also a dangerous turn taken by it. In spite of developing superior equipment for knowing, the idealists proceed with its aid only to condemn the objects of knowledge. Their way of knowing becomes hostile to what is known, i.e. what is known by experience and the application of reason. This hostility of knowledge to the things known is not to be found in the poets of the *Rgveda*, howsoever limited may be the range of their experience and howsoever imperfectly developed may be their power of application of reason.

In short, the general direction of their thought is different. How are we to explain it?

We have tried to understand the general direction of thought of the Upanisadic idealists in terms of their cult of secret wisdom—wisdom estranged from action. It will negatively confirm this understanding if we can now see that the absence of such a general direction of thought of the early Vedic poets is correlated to the absence in their consciousness of any separation of wisdom from action.

Is there this negative confirmation?

It is there and the unique advantage of the Vedic literature is that it enables us to see it clearly. Composed over a period of thousand years or more, it retains a close continuity of inner development. From the Upanisad or Veda-end we can move backwards to the earlier strata of the Vedic literature. When we do this, we have the glimpse—

distant and dim though it may be—of at least the relics of a primitive past qualitatively different from that of the Upanisadic age. What is so important about it is that it enables us to see—depending all the time on definite literary records—that just as the Upanisadic society emerges on the ruins of an ancient undifferentiated community, so also the theoretical temper of the Upanisadic idealists emerges on the ruins of an ancient theoretical temper, which is perhaps best described as representing a primordial complex of wisdom and action. Wisdom, far from becoming the secret possession of a fortunate few, is not yet dissociated from action. Hence it does not develop any contempt for nature with which, through action, men have intercourse. We have in this the clue to the primitive proto-materialism of the early Vedic period.

I have elsewhere[47] discussed the relics of the primitive undivided community in the *Rgveda*. I shall try to discuss here some of the relics of the primordial unity of wisdom and action as found in the *Rgveda*.

Mental labour in its most exalted form, as known to these pre-literate poets, is the oral composition of songs, or, in their own words, 'making verses by the mouth'.[48] However, to them it is only a craft and its glory is best understood on the model of the other craft they know so well, viz. that of the carpenter fashioning the chariot. For understanding the general theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets, this point is of crucial importance. We shall discuss a few evidences in some detail.

An entire hymn of the *Rgveda*[49] has for its theme the drunken monologue of Indra, the war-chief. It describes all sorts of great feats that he boasts of under the influence of *soma*. One of them is that of composing the Vedic song as beautifully as the carpenter makes the chariot. As Indra puts it, *aham tasteva vandhuram paryacami hrda matim*.[50] Sayana, the most orthodox Vedic commentator, interprets it as meaning the act of 'making by the

47. *Ib.* 48. *Rv* i.38.14. 49. *Ib.* x.119. 50. *Ib.* x.119.5.

mind' the hymn in the way in which the carpenter makes the chariot-seat. This cannot be said by one for whom manual labour—compared to mental labour—is a degradation.

This evidence cannot be dismissed as drunken raving only, for the way in which Indra views here the art of poetry is a frequently recurring theme of the *Rgveda*.

In a song in praise of Indra, the poet Purucchepa says: this song is fashioned for you by one desirous of wealth, just as the carpenter endowed with wisdom (*dhirah*) fashions the chariot.[51] The adjective *dhirah*, 'endowed with wisdom', for the carpenter may appear to us as unconventional, for we are not accustomed to associate wisdom with manual operation. We think of the wise man mainly as a contemplator, not a craftsman. But the ancient poets do not think so. For them manual skill is itself a mark of wisdom. Wisdom is yet to be dissociated from action in the consciousness of the Vedic poets.

As if to leave nothing vague about their own attitude, these poets freely use the words *ataksama* and *ataksam* for poetry-making. These words, derived from the root *taks*, 'to make or to fashion', refer primarily to the carpenter's craft. It is this root that gives to the Vedic people the words for the carpenter—*taksan* and *tastr*.[52]

In a song in praise of Agni, the poet says, 'I have fashioned this song for thee just as the wise carpenter fashions the chariot.'[53] The expression used is: *ratham na dhirah svapa ataksam*. As describing the art of poetry, such an expression appears extraordinary particularly for people to whom this art represents intellectual work *par excellence*. But exactly the same expression is used in another song—this time in the context of offering to Indra freshly composed songs along with clothes and chariot.[54] Elsewhere, a poet says, 'Let these songs please the deities Asvins—songs that are fashioned by us (*taksama*) as

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51. *Ib*. i.130.6.
52. Keith VI i.297 & 302.
53. *Rv* v.2.11.
54. *Ib*. v.29.15.

beautifully as the carpenter fashions the chariot'.[55] Describing his own composition another poet says, 'This extensive hymn of mine, shining with brightness, is moving towards the sun and brings welfare to men. I have composed it in the way in which the carpenter makes a strongly built chariot fit for being drawn by the horse.'[56]

Even today, we talk of 'brushing up a poem'. The ancient poets also speak of it. Thus the poet says, *abhi tasteva didhaya manisam,* 'brighten up the song like the carpenter'.[57] Sayana interprets it to mean brightening up the song in the way in which the carpenter makes a piece of wood shining by scraping it.

In accordance with the general attitude underlying all this, the *Rgveda* conceives the poet as a *karu.*[58] Derived from the root *kr,* 'to make', it means the maker. As the maker of song the poet has neither more nor less of social prestige than any other—the carpenter working on wood, the physician healing diseases, the girl grinding corn on the stone, the arrow-maker making arrows with sticks, stones and feathers. This is the impression we have from the oft-quoted labour song of the *Rgveda*[59], which, in spite of describing the division of labour in society, harps on the theme of harmonious working of all.

Certain philological evidences indicate that in the ancient period any sharp distinction between wisdom and action is practically unknown. What the ancient poets are aware of is some kind of a primordial unity of the two—a point not easy to understand in accordance with later preoccupations. Here are a few examples.

In the *Rgveda,* we come across an apparently peculiar word, *vidmanapasah.* We can perhaps best translate it as those that possess 'the wisdom of action' or 'knowledge which is also the know how'. Understandably, it is used in the context of both manual and mental work: chariots

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55. *Ib.* v.73.10. 56. *Ib.* x.93.12. 57. *Ib.* iii.38.1.
58. *Ib.* ii.39.8; viii.62.4; etc. 59. *Ib.* ix.112.

with excellent wheels are fashioned with its aid[60] and it also forms the basis of the poet's craft.[61]

This is a rather rare word in the *Rgveda* no doubt. It occurs only twice in the vast collection. But so are certain other words of more decisive significance. The Vedic poets use them to mean sometimes wisdom and sometimes action. Such words are *dhi, saci, kratu.* They mean wisdom as well as action. All this creates an obvious problem for the compiler of the *Nighantu,* the earliest glossary of Vedic words. Are they to be put in the list of 'words meaning wisdom' (*prajna namani*) or in the list of 'words meaning action' (*karma namani*)? The problem is solved by him by putting the words in both the lists.[62]

These words, therefore, tell their own story. To the ancient poets, wisdom may as well be viewed as action, and action as wisdom. They are not yet aware of a sharp difference between the two. The only wisdom they care for is that of practical activity. Though primitive, it represents the attitude of uniting theory with practice. Incidentally, even the word *maya,* which in the Advaita Vedanta philosophy means the inscrutable principle of cosmic illusion, retains in the *Rgveda* the sense of the primordial unity of wisdom and action.[63].

Philological evidences like these are reminiscent of ancient Greece before the birth there of the idealist outlook:

Prior to the fifth century, not the contrast but the unity of thought and deed is uppermost. In the epic and lyric, knowledge is practical; to know is to know how; wisdom is still in action and therefore power to act. Heraclitus, the first of the philosophers to turn to this theme, assumes as a matter of course that *logos* and *sophie* carry the double reference of true word (and thought) and right deed.[64]

With the growth of slavery and the consequent degradation of manual labour as something by nature slavish,

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60. *Ib.* i.111.1. 61. *Ib.* i.31.1. 62. *Nighantu* ii.1 & iii.9.
63. *Ib.* 64. Vlastos quoted by Farrington in PF 4.

wisdom wants to free itself from its old bond with action, and therefore also from the material world with which, through action, man has intercourse. This tendency culminates in Plato:

For Plato, wisdom meant a knowledge not of nature, but of the supernature constituted by the ideas . . . As for art—that power to control nature the slow acquisition of which by man Democritus regarded as identical with his self-differentiation from the animals—it was relegated by Plato to a kind of limbo. It belonged to the sphere of opinion, the bastard knowledge of the slave, not the truth of the philosopher.[65]

A similar development takes place in India and culminates in Upanisadic idealism. For the present, we are trying to explore the subsoil of this idealism. The art of poetry as understood by the ancient poets gives us a clue to it. Let us take up this clue again.

We hear of a few female poets[66] whose compositions find place in the *Rgveda*. One of them is called Ghosa. She sums up her song, saying, 'Oh Asvins, I have composed this song for thee in the way in which the Bhrgus fashion the chariot'.[67] Though expressed in different words, the idea recurs in the *Rgveda:* we shall make songs for Indra in the way in which the Bhrgus fashion the chariot.[68]

Who are the Bhrgus, whose manual skill the poets want so admiringly to imitate? Commenting on Ghosa's poem, Sayana answers: 'Because of their connection with action (*karmayogat*), the Rbhus are here referred to as the Bhrgus.' The answer is apparently peculiar. The Rbhus stand for a community of Vedic deities while the name Bhrgus 'appears in the historical character of the designation of a tribe'.[69] Why should the 'connection with action' create in the commentator's imagination such a substitution of the deities by the tribesmen?

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65. Farrington in PF 5. 66. *Brhaddevata* ii.82.4. 67. *Rv* x.39.14. 68. *Ib.* iv.16.20. 69. *Ib.* viii.3.9; vii.18.6; cf. Macdonell VM 140.

Sayana mentions no ground for this and thus leaves us only to conjecture. One of the conjectures is that the commentator's imagination is saturated with Vedic mythology, in which the Rbhus occupy a peculiar position. They are originally only human beings, but they are eventually raised to the status of the deities because of 'their connection with action'—their craftsmanship or labour skill—a very important form of which is making excellent chariots. Could it be that all this leads the commentator so easily to associate the Rbhus with the Bhrgus because of the mention of the activity of chariot-making?

In any case, one point is beyond doubt. Discussing the manual skill of chariot-making, Sayana is easily reminded of the Rbhus. This is important, because it leads us to see a fascinating feature of early Vedic mythology: manual work, far from carrying any social stigma, is considered so important that it raises ordinary human beings to the status of Vedic deities. We quote Macdonell's summary[70] of the relevant evidences of the *Rgveda*:

Besides the higher gods of the Veda there are a number of mythical beings not regarded as having the divine nature fully and originally. The most important of these are the Rbhus. They are celebrated in eleven hymns of the *Rgveda* and are mentioned by name over a hundred times... The Rbhus are about a dozen times called by the patronymic name of Saudhanvana, sons of Sudhanvan, 'the good archer'... With Indra they help mortals to victory (iv.37.6) and are invoked with him to crush foes (vii.48.3). They are said to have obtained the friendship of Indra by their skilful work (iii.60.3; iv.35.7 & 9), for it is they who fashioned his steeds... The Rbhus are characteristically deft-handed (*suhastah*) and skilful (iv.33.1 & 8; etc), their skilful deeds being incomparable (iii.60.4). They are frequently said to have acquired the rank of gods in consequence of their marvellous skill. Through their wondrous deeds they obtained divinity (iii.60.1). By their skilful deeds they became gods and immortal, alighting like eagles in heaven

70. Macdonell VM 131-32.

(iv.35.8). They are men of the air who by their energy mounted to heaven (i.110.6). For their skilful services they went the path of immortality to the host of the gods (iv.35.3), obtaining immortality among the gods and their friendship (iv.33.3 & 4; iv.35.3; iv.36.4). But they were originally mortals, children of Manu, who by their industry acquired immortality (iii.60.3; i.110.4) . . . They went to the gods and obtained the sacrifice, or a share of the sacrifice, among the gods through their skilful work (i.20.1 & 8; i.21.6 & 7) . . . They are thus sometimes expressedly invoked as gods (iv.36.5; iv.37.1). Like the higher gods they are besought to give prosperity and wealth (iv.33.8; iv.37.5) in cattle, horses, heroes (iv.34.10) and to grant vigour, nourishment, offspring, dexterity (i.111.2). They grant treasures to the *soma* presser (1.20.7; iv.35.6). He whom they help is invinsible in fight (iv.36.6).

Such then is the peculiarity of the mythological imagination of the ancient Vedic people. Excellence in manual skill is so marvellous that it raises ordinary human beings to the status of the gods. Since mythology does not grow out of nothing, all this leads us to infer a society—with its characteristic mode of consciousness—in which the craftsmen along with their craft retain great prestige.

Let us try to follow up the suggestion of Vedic mythology a little further.

How do the Rbhus acquire so much of excellence in arts and crafts? From whom do they receive the training for it? The *Brhaddevata*[71] answers:

They become pupils of Tvastr. Tvastr instructed them in every art of which he was a master (*tvastra*). The All-gods, who are thoroughly versed in the arts, challenged them. They then made for all the gods vehicles and weapons. They made the nectar-yielding cow . . . of Brhaspati, then for the Asvins a divine car with three seats, and for Indra his two bay steeds: also what they did through Agni who had been dispatched to them by the gods . . . And Tvastr and Savitr, and the god of gods Prajapati, summoning all the gods, bestowed immortality on the Rbhus.

This leads us to see the greatest craftsman of Vedic ima-

71. *Brhaddevata* iii.83-8.

gination. The poets call him Tvastr and describe in various ways his skill in arts and crafts:[72]

He is a skilful workman (i.85.9; iii.54.12) producing various objects showing the skill of an artificer. He is in fact the most skilful of workmen, versed in crafty contrivances (x.53.9). He is several times said (v.31.4; etc) to have fashioned (*taks*) the bolt of Indra. He also sharpens the iron axe of Brahmanaspati (x.53.9). He formed a new cup (i.20.6) which contained the food of the *asura* (i.110.3) or the beverage of the gods (i.161.5; iii.35.5). He thus possesses vessels out of which the gods drink (x.53.9).

Interestingly, these ancient poets—because they are yet to know the mystery of biological reproduction—are inclined to see the hands of the great craftsman even behind the creation of men and animals:[73]

The *Rgveda* further states that Tvastr adorned all beings with form (x.110.9). He develops the germ in the womb and is the shaper of all forms, human and animal (i.188.9; viii.91.8; x.184.1). Similar statements are frequently made in later Vedic texts, where he is characteristically a creator of forms. He himself is called omniform (*visvarupa*) oftner than any other deity in the *Rgveda*. As fashioner of living forms, he is frequently described as presiding over generation and bestowing offspring (iii.4.9; etc). Thus he is said to have fashioned husband and wife for each other from the womb (x.10.50). He has produced and nourishes a great variety of creatures (iii.55.19) . . . He is indeed a universal father, for he produced the whole world.

Even some of the great Vedic gods—Brhaspati, Agni, Indra—are sometimes conceived as being created by this master craftsman.[74]

But who is this great god that gives shape practically to everything known to the Vedic poets? The best clue to him is to be found in his name:[75]

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72. Macdonell VM 116. *Rv.* x.8 describes Indra decapitating the three-headed son of Tvastr and an Indus seal depicts somebody with three heads. These are about the only substantial evidences for Kosambi's strange conjecture that Trastr is originally an Indus priest (or deity?).

73. *Ib.* 74. *Ib.* 75. *Ib.* 117.

The word (*tvastr*) is derived from a rare root *tvaks*, of which only one verbal form, besides some nominal derivatives, occurs in the *Rgveda*, and the cognate of which, *thwaks*, is found in the *Avesta*. It appears to be identical in meaning with the common root *taks*, which is used with the name of Tvastr in referring to the fashioning of Indra's bolt. The meaning therefore appears to be the 'Fashioner' or 'Artificer'.

There are thus grounds to think that this god is only a personification of craftsmanship. In any case, his name is precariously near the Vedic word for the carpenter—*taksan* or *tastr*—both derived from the root *taks*, meaning manual skill. In the songs ennobling the activities of his apprentices—the Rbhus—the most frequently recurring verb is the same. "The same verb *taks*, to fashion, is generally used with reference to the manual skill of the Rbhus as to that of Tpastr."[76]

From what we can infer about the early Vedic poets, therefore, it is only to be expected that in their view the 'working hands' still retain a great deal of glory and there is no question of these being pushed to the background by the glory of the products of the head—pure wisdom or pure reason as conceived by the Upanisadic idealists. As a matter of fact, Vedic mythology clearly satisfies this expectation.

Macdonell[77] notes that Vedic poets take no special care to describe the physical features of Tvastr and the Rbhus. But there is a significant exception to this. The poets do take special care in describing the glory of their working hands. Thus we are repeatedly told that Tvastr has wonderful hands: he is *supani*[78], he is *suhasta*[79] like his pupils, he is *sugabhasti*[80]—all referring to the dexterity of his hands. Sometimes these adjectives are repeated in the same verse, evidently for placing special emphasis on this feature of the god. The same is true of the Rbhus. The praise of

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76. *Ib.* 132. 77. *Ib.* 116 & 131. 79. *Ib.* vii.35.12.
78. *Rv* vii.34.20; vi.49.9. 80. *Ib.* vi.49.9.

their working hands is about the only important aspect of their physical feature that we read in the *Rgveda.*[81]

As if to make their own attitude to manual labour fully clear the poets tell us that some of the great Vedic gods share this glory of Tvastr and the Rbhus. Excellent working hands are also possessed by Mitra and Varuna[82], Indra[83], Agni[84], Savitr[85] and others. One of the lesser poets of the later period, described as the son of the female poet Ghosa already quoted, has the name Suhastya, 'one with dextrous hands'. In the poem attributed to him[86], he praises his own working hands[87] evidently in imitation of the gods.

Such then are the ancient conditions as remembered by Vedic literature. In the later Vedic period, however, things are strikingly different. In the words of Engels,[88]

> ...the more modest productions of the working hand retreated into the background, the more so since the mind that planned the labour was able, at a very early stage in the development of society, to have the labour that had been planned carried out by other hands than its own. All merit for the swift advance of civilization was ascribed to the mind, to the development and activity of the brain. Men became accustomed to explain their actions as arising out of thoughts instead of their needs; and so in the course of time there emerged that idealistic world outlook which, specially since the fall of the world of antiquity, has dominated men's minds. It still rules them.

This brings us to the Upanisadic period—the period in which, along with the new norm of living on the surplus produced by the labour of others, there emerges the cult of secret wisdom, supposed to be the possession of a fortunate few of the times. This wisdom, completely cut off from action, develops a sense of delusional omnipotence of its own: it wants to dictate terms to reality and to be recognised as the only reality.

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81. *Ib.* iv.33.8; iv.35.3; iv.35.9; v.42.12; x.66.10.
82. *Ib.* i.71.9; iii.56.7.
83. *Ib.* iii.33.6.
84. *Ib.* i.109.4.
85. *Ib.* vii.55.4.
86. *Ib.* x.41.
87. *Ib.* x.41.3.
88. Engels DN 180.

9. Reassertion of the Logic of Parasitism

The idealist outlook, as we have seen, emerges in the Upanisads as the typical outcome of the parasitical consciousness of the leisured class, of the kings and their ideological apologists who are divorced from the labour of production. The same logic of parasitism leading the philosophers to the world-denying extravagance can broadly be traced behind the reassertion of the idealist outlook among the Mahayana Buddhists.

The rise of the Mahayana is a vast and complicated subject no doubt. Much of the information about it remains still to be recovered from the Tibetan and Chinese sources. Lacking details, we have scope here to discuss only a few points of general interest.

The first thing to be noted about the Mahayana is its radical rupture from the creed as originally preached by the Buddha. We have thus to begin with a brief note on original Buddhism.

For all that we know of him, the Buddha is strongly against the tendency of metaphysical excess in general and Upanisadic idealism in particular. His own teachings consist mainly of the four noble truths. These are: everything is suffering, suffering has a cause, it can be extinguished, there is a path leading to its extinction.

The first question about early Buddhism is naturally concerning its first noble truth. Why does the prophet see suffering in everything and everywhere? I have elsewhere[89] tried to answer the question in terms of the colossal social upheavals of his age. It is the age in which northeast India witnesses the rise of ruthless state-powers—particularly of Magadha and Kosala—on the ruins of the tribal and semitribal societies. As is characteristic of such an age, 'base greed, brutal sensuality, sordid avarice, selfish plunder of common possession', taxation, usury, extortion, etc. create an enormous mass of hitherto unheard of

89. Chattapadhyaya L Chapter 7.

miseries in the lives of the people, from whose memory liberty, equality and fraternity of the tribal societies are yet to be completely washed out, and among whose neighbours—like the Sakyas and Vajjians—still survive many features of tribal democracy. For the rising state-powers such examples of democracy are dangerous. The suppression and extermination of these democracies thus form part of the political policy of the rising state-powers.

The Buddha himself belongs to the Sakyas and is ever proud of being so. But during his own life-time, Vidudabha, the prince of Kosala, unleashes the most brutal massacre on the Sakyas. The Buddha wants to model his own *samgha* or brotherhood of monks on the principles of democracy still practised by the Vajjians. But king Ajatasatru of Magadha declares, 'I will root out the Vajjians, I will destroy the Vajjians, I will bring these Vajjians to utter ruin.' And the king carries out this design at least to a large extent.

The Buddha, with his strong nostalgia for tribal democracy, feels alarmed by such naked aggression prompted by sheer greed. 'The king', he says, 'although he may be the ruler of all land this side of the sea, up to the ocean's shore, will still insatiate, covet that which is beyond the sea.' But does this exempt the kings from the suffering that the Buddha sees in everything? It does not; the same greed recoils on them and becomes the source of their own sufferings. Two of the Buddha's early friends are king Prasenajit of Kosala and king Bimbisara of Magadha. The former is ruined by the treachery of his own son Vidudabha and the latter killed by starvation by his son Ajatasatru. 'The princes who rule the kingdom', says the Buddha, 'rich in treasures and wealth, turn their greed against one another, pandering insatiably to their desires. If these act thus restlessly, swimming in the stream of impermanance, carried along by greed and carnal desire, who then can walk on earth in peace?' Evidently none that the Buddha is aware of. What then can he see but suffering everywhere and in everything?

But how, in the conditions in which he lives, can he suggest a way out? Refusing to share the illusion of the social parasites, he does not recommend prayers and sacrifices to an imaginary god nor to indulge in metaphysical fantasies designed to remove the fact of suffering from the realm of the real. He does not believe in god and he has no patience for the metaphysics of pure spirit. What he seeks, therefore, is some effective and practical measure against the fact of suffering. Nevertheless at that time there is no question of removing the real sufferings from the actual world. Even the prophet cannot skip over the stages of historical development and jump straight to socialism which alone, on the basis of a very high development of human productive power and the termination of exploitation of man by man, can ensure the removal of avoidable human suffering. The only alternative left for the prophet is to evolve an *ideal* solution of the *real* problem—a subjective remedy for the objective misery—in short, to effect a psychological transformation of personality by which to overcome the sense of suffering itself. Life, as he finds it, is too hard to endure. What is historically within his reach is only to suggest a palliative. This is what he sets himself to do.

'A new doctrine', he declares, 'do I preach for subduing the mental intoxicants that are generated even in this present life.' His purpose, he says, is to bring a 'quietude of the heart'. This, when achieved, means the extinction of suffering. The Buddha calls it *nirvana*.

What is so remarkable about original Buddhism is its simplicity. "It can hardly be said to represent a religion Its more religious side, the teaching of a path, is utterly human. Man reaches salvation by his own effort, through moral and intellectual perfection. Nor was there, for aught we know, very much of a worship in Buddhism of that time. The community consisted of recluses possessing neither family nor property, assembling twice a month for open confession of their sins and engaged in the practice of aus-

terity, meditation and philosophic discussion".[90] There is not much of external ceremonials, no tendency to build up an imposing superstition, no enthusiasm to indulge in theological-metaphysical speculations. The Buddha in fact discourages all these. The only philosophical discussion he appears to encourage is concerning the fact of suffering, its cause and the methods of its extinction.

Within a few centuries of the death of the Buddha, however, there is the most dramatic transformation of the creed. One aspect of this transformation is the conscious cultivation of superstitions, which, in the course of time, assume such a magnitude that Buddhism is changed beyond recognition. No wonder that the religion then feels the need of a new name for itself. The name invented is Mahayana.

The heap of new superstitions without which the Mahayana is really inconceivable would have been irrelevant for the purpose of our main discussion, but for the fact that the neo-Buddhists themselves find it convenient to revive the essential features of the Upanisadic idealism only under its protective care. Evidently they find it difficult to preach their world-denying extravagance consistently with the Buddha's realistic and somewhat rationalistic attitude. By contrast, a theological soil well-prepared with quaint superstitions is best suited for the flourishing of philosophical idealism in the form in which they want to preach it, i.e. as sanctioned only by mysticism and obscurantism.

Understandably, the first need felt by the later Buddhists is to tamper with the memory of the historical founder of the creed. This they do with an elaborate theory, which is usually called "Buddhalogy". Instead of the Buddha, they start talking of many Buddhas—a very large number of them alleged to precede the historical one as well as a large number imagined to succeed him, inclusive of what they call the Bodhisattvas or Future Buddhas. These Buddhas have nothing in common with the material

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90. Stcherbatsky BL i.7.

world. Everything about them is supposed to be supernatural. 'If they seem to think, speak, act and suffer like us, it is merely by condescension, in order to conform outwardly to our weakness'. Their form or *rupa*—that which appears as body to our mortal eyes—is really made of mind alone (*manomaya*).

It is evident, therefore, that the manifestation in this world of the marvellous being who reigned among the Tusita gods was not in reality what it seemed to be. The Bodhisattva, after all, assumed merely an empty appearance of humanity in condescension to the ways of the world (*lokanuvartana*). The body which he shows to men and gods conceals its true nature from the 'worldly' mind. One may go further and say that this body is only an illusion.[91]

This is the theological trick by which the historical Buddha is made to vanish. Like everything else about the Mahayana, the theory of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas acquires a fabulous form. The most important point about it is the distinction between *dharma-kaya, nirmana-kaya,* and *rupa-kaya.*

The concept of the *dharma-kaya* is sometimes rendered as the 'cosmical body of the Buddha'. But it needs some explanation. The key to it is the Mahayana concept of *dharmata,* which means the ultimate reality or the Absolute. This Absolute is supposed to be beyond the reach of our ordinary knowledge and indescribable by our ordinary language, beyond asserting the bare fact of its existence, which the Mahayanists call *tathata* or 'bare suchness'. From its point of view, all objects normally known are sheer nothingness—a circumstance that leads the Mahayanists to identify *dharmata* with *sunyata,* the latter meaning nothingness of the world of experience from the point of view of the Absolute. Only the perfect saint, in his state of final salvation or *nirvana,* is supposed to realise this highly mystical Absolute—a state of realisation in which nothing remains but the Absolute itself. Hence the other word for *dharmata* is *nirvana.*

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91. Vallee Poyssin in ERE ii.742-43.

In Mahayana, *dharma-kaya* stands for the complete identity of the concept of the Buddha with *dharmata*. But such a theory is obviously too abstruse to have popular consumption. Besides something is needed to account for the popular belief in the historical Buddha, who is born among the Sakyas and who works for the removal of human miseries. This leads the Mahayanists to supplement their concept of *dharma-kaya* by that of *nirmana-kaya*. The latter means the phantom body or illusory body temporarily assumed by the Absolute as the Buddha in the human form. Though actually nonexistent it has the appearance of existence—something like the magic elephant conjured up by the magician's stage-craft. But why does the Absolute assume such a phantom body? According to this new theology, the Absolute or *dharma-kaya*—moved by the infinite compassion for all living beings—assumes this phantom body so that it can descend to the earth and work for the salvation of all living beings. This phantom, in so far as it is perceived by the mortal eyes to have flesh and blood, is the *rupa-kaya* i.e. the physical body of the Buddha.

With this queer blend of mythology and metaphysics, the Mahayanists feel satisfied about one thing. It is the successful elimination of the historical Buddha. With this elimination, it becomes comparatively easy for them to remove from Buddhism the Buddha's own distaste for god. They argue that though from the standpoint of the absolute truth the *dharma-kaya* is indescribable, there is also something about it for the understanding of the ordinary people who remain bogged down with mundane considerations. For them the *dharma-kaya* or 'the unique essence of the universe becomes personified and worshipped under the names of Vairocana, Amitabha, the goddess Tara, and others, as a supreme god. Buddhism becomes at once pantheistic and theistic, or, as Professor Anesaki prefers to put it, cosmo-theistic.'[92]

Into this concept of *dharma-kaya* the Mahayanists infuse

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92. Stcherbatsky CBN 78-9.

all the characteristics of god traditionally known, only with one significant exception. He is omniscient, omnipotent, all-merciful, etc. Only it is denied that he is the creator of the world. Beginning with Nagarjuna, most of the prominent Mahayana philosophers argue against the other Indian theists, who conceive god mainly as the creator of the world.

This helps them to serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, it allows them to retain a formal fidelity to the original atheism of the Buddha, because by refuting the concept of the creator they pretend to reject completely the concept of *isvara* or god of the theists. On the other hand, it also serves them with a more serious philosophical purpose. It is the defence of the view of the essential illusoriness of the world. The creator, once admitted, amounts to the admission of the act of creation, and this act—seriously taken—entails the risk of admitting the reality of the world created. Thus by refuting the concept of the creator, the neo-Buddhists hope to prove that the creation of the world—and hence the world as such—is no more than a fiction. This point is later reiterated by Gaudapada, whose view is known as *ajata-vada* or the theory that the world never comes into being. Thus notwithstanding all that the atheistic tradition of Indian philosophy gains[93] from the technical arguments refuting the concept of the creator, it would be wrong to overlook the fact that the Mahayana Buddhists reinstate into Buddhism the conception of the supreme god —a conception curtly rejected by the Buddha.

The supreme god, once admitted into Buddhism, opens the door for the free influx of all sorts of subsidiary supernatural agents—inclusive of the later deities, devils and hobgoblins—all arranged in a hierarchy, the pattern of which is presumably borrowed from the feudal set-up of the country.[94] One has only to enter a Mahayana monastery and see in its paintings and statues what a mixed and mon-

93. Chattopadhyaya IA 115ff.
94. Sharma DCL 7.

strous pantheon is superimposed on the simple atheism of the Buddha.

All this cannot but change the religious practices of later Buddhists. If it is appropriate to invoke the mercy of the supreme god and of some lesser deities with prayers and propitiations, the devils and hobgoblins are to be pacified or brought under control only with rituals and spells appropriate for them. Mahayana in practice assumes the form of the most extraordinary combination of prayers, propitiations, magical rituals and all sorts of weird ceremonials. Buddhism, in short, assumes the form of grotesque supernaturalism both in theory and practice. Under the protective care of all this, the Mahayana philosophers find it convenient to revive the essential features of Upanisadic idealism in the name of a higher form of Buddhism.

All this does not at all mean that these philosophers depend simply on supernaturalism. They have among them some of the most skilful metaphysicians who raise the naive idealism of the Upanisads to a high level of philosophical sophistication. But the point is that the same philosophers do in fact dilate much on the new superstitions, showing thereby that they feel their need also. Why is the need? The idealist outlook is something like a bitter pill which it is difficult to make people swallow particularly because of the stubborn resistance to it by hard common sense of practical life. Dry philosophical sophistry, howsoever tricky, does not serve this purpose. It is also necessary to crack the hard common sense which is perhaps best done by the weight of mighty superstitions. From this point of view, the Mahayana religion is not irrelevant for the spread of the Mahayana philosophy.

For our present purpose, we need not go into greater details of Mahayana religion. We are primarily interested here in another question. What is it that possibly accounts for such a transformation of Buddhism, both as religion and philosophy?

At the present stage of historical research, it may be premature to attempt a full answer to the question. What is

nevertheless obvious must not be overlooked. It is the ever-increasing support and patronage—both financial and political—extended to Buddhism by merchants, petty rulers and even great monarchs. This patronage, though adding greatly to its external grandeur, makes it progressively parasitical and saps its inner vitality so much so that Buddhism eventually succumbs practically to the same beliefs and practices in conscious rejection of which the Buddha originally preaches his creed.

The beginnings of this patronage are perhaps to be traced to the lifetime of the Buddha. As an *ideal* solution of the *real* problem—a technique to bring 'a quietude of the heart' and to subdue 'the mental intoxicants generated even in this life'—Buddhism, even in its early form, provides the people with a good palliative so badly needed in the age. It easily claims financial support of the merchants and kings, in whose own interest such a soothing way of counteracting the possible outbursts of popular discontent proves useful. The Buddhist tradition records the account of grand gifts by members of the privileged class to the Buddha and the community of his monks preaching the new creed. The most spectacular of these is the gift of the pleasure garden Jetavana by Anathapindaka, who, for the purchase of the park and for the constructions on it, is said to have spent fiftyfour crore pieces of gold! Evidently, if the amount spent is exaggerated, the intention is to inflate the piety of the donor.

According to the Buddhist tradition, the patronage to the creed reaches its climax under king Asoka. It is because of this that Buddhism receives its first real boost: from being the creed of a few small communities localised in the Gangetic valley, it makes its way dramatically throughout Asoka's vast empire, stretching itself beyond its boundaries. In sheer gratitude, the pious Buddhists look back at the emperor as the 'Second Buddha', or, according to the Buddhist way of putting it, the 'second turner of the wheel'. Though modern historians are far from being certain about

how much of Buddhism actually enters the heart of Asoka, it is perhaps clear that the king finds this new ideology extremely useful for the purpose of extending and stabilising his power over the vast subcontinent: it is much better than the technique of brutal suppression and mass-scale man-slaughter with which Asoka experiments before what is called his 'conversion to Buddhism'. His edicts describe this ideological conquest or *dharma-vijaya* as immensely better than that of arms.

But all this is only one chapter of the story of the privileged class patronage extended to Buddhism. One has only to glance through Taranatha's *History of Buddhism in India* to see how it continues after Asoka. To this Tibetan historian we owe much for information about later Indian Buddhism which is otherwise lost to us but which he himself compiles from sources originally Indian. From the very 'table of contents' with which Taranatha begins, it appears that his enthusiasm for the financiers of Buddhism does not lag much behind his admiration for its actual exponents.

This patronage, on which Buddhism thrives for many centuries, adds much to its external pomp and grandeur. Innumerable monasteries and Buddhist shrines are established in the country. Provision is made for wholetime preachers and expensive methods are adopted for copying and propagating Buddhist scriptures. We quote only a part of what Taranatha calls the 'account of the period of the beginning of the extensive propagation of the Mahayana'[95]:

After the third council, king Kaniska passed away. There lived a very wealthy householder called Jati in Asmaparanta in the north, near the Thoger country to the west of Kashmir . . . He entertained three lakhs of monks for twelve years . . .

In the Puskalavati Palace, king Kaniska's son entertained for five years one hundred *arya*-s and *arhat*-s and ten thousand other monks. There lived a *brahmana* called Viduh in Kusumapura in the east. He prepared many copies of the *Tripitaka* and donated these to the monks . . . He

95. Chattopadhyaya (ed.) THBI 96ff.

also provided lavishly each monk with materials for worship...

There was a king called Laksvasa in the west. He also worked extensively for the Law of the Buddha.

In Saurastra in south-west, there lived a *brahmana* called Kulika. There lived then a *mahasthavira arhat* called Nanda, who was born in Anga and was well-versed in Mahayana. On hearing about him, he (Kulika) invited him to learn from him the Mahayana.

At that time there appeared all at once innumerable *kalyanamitra*-s in different places capable of preaching the Mahayana... There were about five hundred preachers of the Doctrine (i.e. Mahayana)... From the lands of the gods, Nagas, Gandharvas, Raksasas, etc.—but particularly from the land of the Nagas—were obtained most of the *sutra*-s like (Taranatha gives a list of some of the early Mahayana texts).

Most of the *acarya*-s were invited by *brahmana* Kulika. When king Laksvasa heard about this, he was full of great reverence. Desirous of inviting these five hundred preachers of the Doctrine (i.e. Mahayana), he asked his minister, 'What is the number of the preachers of the Doctrine?'

'Five Hundred'.

'What is the number of the listeners to the Doctrine?'

'Five Hundred.'

So the king thought: though there were many preachers of the Doctrine, the listeners to it were few. Thinking thus, he built five hundred temples on the top of the mount Abu. To each of these he invited one teacher and provided each with all the necessaries. From among his own attendants, he selected five hundred intelligent and highly devout persons, got them ordained and engaged them to listen to the Mahayana.

After this the king felt desirous of having copies of the scriptures. The king asked, 'How voluminous are the Mahayana *pitaka*-s?'

'Normally these cannot be measured. However, what we now possess run to one hundred lakhs of *sloka*-s.'

The king said, 'So this is enormous. Still, let us have more copies.' Saying this, he got all these copied out and he donated the copies to the monks. These works were later brought to Sri Nalendra (Nalanda). ... Thus was spread the fame of Mahayana in all directions.

And so on—pages after pages in Taranatha's *History of*

Buddhism in India literally gloat over all these details and we have no ground to doubt his basic point that because of such patronage the rate of progress of the spread of Buddhism in India becomes very spectacular. However what he does not note—and what we do not really expect a devout Mahayanist like him to note—is that there is also something malignant about the nature of this growth. Nothing indeed proves more ruinous for Buddhist ideology than to thrive on and draw its sanction from the continuous patronage of the privileged section of the community. It saps the inner vitality of the creed and makes it progressively helpless against the intrusion of all sorts of beliefs and practices which, though repulsive to the spirit of original Buddhism, serve ever more crudely and bluntly the interests of those on whose support the religion thrives. Those who pay the piper have after all the right to call the tune.

We quote here an obvious example of this from R S. Sharma:[96]

Despite the fact that most Kusana rulers were Buddhist, they tried to deify themselves by adopting the title of *devaputra* (son of God) and instituting the dead king's cult. The deification of the king was foreign to the Buddhist theories of the origin of kingship as enunciated in the *Digha Nikaya*... Once the title *devaputra* had been adopted by the Kusana rulers, theoretical justification came to be provided in a near contemporary Mahayanist Buddhist text, *Suvarnaprabhasottama-sutra,* to which attention was first drawn by Sylvain Levi. Here the question is asked why a king born as a man is called God (*deva*) and why he is styled the son of God (*devaputra*). The answer is that before being born as a man he was living among the gods, and that, because the thirtythree gods (each) contributed to his substance, therefore he is called God-son.

We shall later have the occasion to discuss in detail the views of kingship as expressed in the texts of earlier and later Buddhism. For the present the point is that this new view of kingship as expressed in the Mahayana text is only one aspect of the changed ideological function later

96. Sharma APIIAI 226-7.

Buddhism is made to serve to cater to the needs of its patrons, on whose financial and political support it becomes increasingly dependent. The most dominant feature of this new ideological development is the world-denying idealist outlook backed by extremely awe-inspiring superstitions. The social function of this will be taken up by us in the next chapter, where we propose to discuss the effectiveness of the idealist outlook and its correspondent superstitions for the purpose of keeping the toiling masses reconciled to their economic and social deprivations. Buddhism in its final phase serves this purpose in a big way. But this can be done only at a great cost. It is the ultimate collapse of Buddhism as an independent creed, when, philosophically speaking, it becomes only the reassertion of the Upanisadic idealism on a more sophisticated level and, theologically, it reverts to what is usually called Brahmanical religion perhaps in a cruder form.

Taranatha, in his own way, compiles for us enougn material to see how the ever-increasing intrusion of alien beliefs and practices into Buddhism causes its eventual collapse. The history of Buddhism, as he describes it, is to a great extent the history of how it gradually becomes practically indistinguishable from the body of beliefs and practices in active opposition to which the Buddha originally preaches his creed. We shall mention here only one aspect of this transformation.

The Vikramasila-vihara, the last grand centre of Buddhism in India built by king Dharmapala, is described by Taranatha to have special and large-scale provisions for the *bali-acarya* and *homa-acarya*, i.e. for priests with their age-old sacrificial functions famous among those that are considered aliens or *tirthika*-s by the Buddhists.

The central temple in it had a human-size statue of the Mahabodhi. Around it there were fiftythree smaller temples of the Guhya Tantra and fiftyfour common temples. Thus he (king Dharmapala) built the *vihara* with a total of one

hundred and eight temples and the boundary walls. He lavishly provided with food and clothes one hundred and fourteen persons, namely one hundred and eight *pandita*-s and the Bali-acarya, Pratisthana-acarya, Homa-acarya, Musika-pala, Kapota-pala and the supervisor of the *deva-dasa*-s. For each of them he made provisions that were sufficient for four. Every month he organised a festival for those that listened to the Doctrine and also made excellent gifts to them.[97]

One of the most outstanding spiritual leaders of this centre is Buddhajnanapada. His spiritual performance, however, is directly designed to increase the material prosperity of his patron.

He told king Dharmapala, 'There are indications of the ruin of the dynasty during the rule of your grandson. Perform the great *homa* so that the dynasty may last long and the Doctrine also may be extensively spread.'

Accordingly, he (Dharmapala) got the *homa* performed for many years by the *vajradhara*-s with this *acarya* as their chief and offered during this performance articles worth nine lakh and two thousand *tola*-s of silver.

He (the *acarya*) predicted (to the king), 'Twelve of your successors will be kings, and up to your fifth descendant in particular, many countries will be under their rule and the law (Buddhism) also will be extensively spread.'[98]

More examples are perhaps not necessary. The happenings in the Vikramasila-vihara are enough to make the prophet shudder, though he is comfortably relegated to the Tusita heaven by the Mahayana Buddhists.

In short, in this last grand Indian centre of Buddhism, there remains practically only a carcass of the creed. And the only string on which its fate now hangs is the fad of some big patrons—the Palas of Bengal being about the last of them in India. With the political collapse of the Pala kings, this string snaps and Buddhism in India goes to pieces, desperately seeking shelter under patrons abroad.

Such is the fate that ultimately awaits Buddhism when it chooses for itself the career of pure parasitism. But the

97. Chattopadhyaya (ed) THBI 275.
98. *Ib.* 278-9.

career is chosen much earlier and we may try to have some idea of how this choice is first made.

10. The "Second Council" and After

Modern scholars are generally inclined to view the Mahayana as the culmination of an earlier tendency which makes itself manifest among a section of the Buddhists. They call themselves the Mahasanghikas, *i.e.* 'those who gather in the great assembly'. What then is this great assembly?

The story of this leads us to see the first great split among the Buddhists. It takes place shortly after what is called their Second Council convened about a hundred years after the death of the Buddha. There is of course much confusion in the Buddhist tradition about this council—particularly about its exact date and place and about the king under whose patronage it is organised. But the main reason which leads the Buddhists to convene it appears on the whole clear. A section of them—usually referred to as the monks of Vaisali—lose patience for the rules of austerity of conduct prescribed by the Buddha. They refuse to see the relevance of these rules in the altered conditions in which they live, and they go on flouting them. Yasas, then a senior leader of the community, comes to know of this, and he feels alarmed. He mobilises the brotherhood of monks to assemble in the Second Council. The main agenda of the council is naturally the consideration of the violation of the codes of conduct by the Vaisali monks. The council takes its decision against them. But they refuse to submit to the decision. Very soon they convene a separate assembly of their own, and in this ten thousand monks are said to gather. This is their 'great assembly' and those who gather in it are called the Mahasanghikas. In the course of some decades they grow remarkably in popularity and power. They not only modify the older codes of monastic conduct but also redraft the older canonical literature, taking care to graft into these certain theoretical innovations of their own. The movement thus started finds its culmination in the Mahayana.

For our understanding of the rise of the Mahayana, therefore, one of the crucial questions is: What is it that leads the Mahasanghikas to break away from the original path of the Buddha? In the Buddhist tradition, the typical description of this is the 'violation of the ten prohibitions'. This means that for the purpose of living the life of extreme austerity, the Buddha prescribes certain practices as prohibited for the monks. But the Vaisali monks find at least some of these to be obsolete and so they violate the older prohibitions in ten ways.

It is difficult today to be exact about the nature of the 'ten prohibitions', for the lists in different sources do not concur. But whatever may be their actual details, there are grounds to think that by flouting them the dissident monks want to enjoy the direct material benefits of the financial support offered to the Buddhists. Thus, the *Vinaya-ksudraka*[99] gives the following reason for the concern felt by Yasas, which leads him to organise the Second Council:

And from the city of Dhanika, there came an *arhat* called Yasas with five hundred attendants, who had made a turn to the country. Having arrived at Vaisali they found that the monks had a large income and they themselves obtained a great share.

The text adds that on inquiring the reasons for this, Yasas finds that the monks no longer agree to avoid the ten practices prohibited by the Buddha.

Another Buddhist source[100] describes as follows the way in which these monks start collecting money for themselves:

Taking alms-bowls such as were round, pure and suitable for ritual, anointing them with perfumes, fumigating them with incense, adorning them with various fragrant flowers, placed on the head of a monk over a cushion went about the highways, streets and cross-roads, crying as follows: 'Hear, ye people, who have come from various towns and countries, and ye wise people of Vaisali! this *patra* (bowl) is a

99. Quoted by Bu-ston. Obermiller (tr) Bu-ston ii.91.
100. Dutt BSI 19-20.

lucky one; to give in it is to give much, or whoever shall fill it will obtain a great fruit, a great advantage, a great activity, a great development.'

Following is another account[101] of the practice of the Vaisali monks and the resentment of Yasas to it:

The monks of Vaisali used to address the donors in these words: 'Respected brothers, at the time when *bhagavan* Buddha was living, we received two meals in a day, robes, service and adoration. After his *parinirvana,* who will take care of us, we have become orphans, and so we request you to give silver to the *sangha.* As we are Buddhist friars, you should give to the *sangha* one, two, up to ten *karsapana*-s.'

On the day of Uposatha, donors put in large sums in the basin placed at the crossing of roads. The monks collected the contents, and after dividing them according to the number of *bhiksus*, distributed the same to the monks present. In this way came the turn of *vidyadhara* Yasas and he was offered his share. Yasas enquired, 'Wherefrom was this money coming?' They replied, 'We receive money as well as medicines.' Yasas retorted that it was wrong: it was not permissible. They replied, 'You are slandering the sangha by these words. You should therefore be excommunicated.'

More passages like these may be quoted from the different traditions of the Buddhists. But that is not necessary for our present purpose. Some of the modern scholars have reviewed the available traditions and have concluded, "the monks living in Vaisali had relaxed certain rules of the discipline. In particular they collected gold and silver and money from the lay disciples . . . All the versions of the *Vinaya* agree that the chief matter disputed was the question of cash donations to the monks."[102]

Significantly, this taste of the direct material benefit of the financial support to Buddhism causes in the dissident monks some form of parasitical consciousness and hence a distaste for the theoretical foundation of original Buddhism, which, whatever may be the nature of its weakness, is not the outcome of parasitism. The Mahasanghikas (or

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101. *Ib.* 22.
102. Warder 208-9.

more strictly a subsection of them), we are told, are the first to push aside the memory of the human founder of the creed and replace it by the theory of the 'supernatural Buddha' (*lokottara-buddha*)—a theory eventually elaborated by the Mahayanists in the form of their fantastic Buddhalogy. They show moreover marked predilection for metaphysical speculation, which, if not idealist in the full Mahayana sense of the term, is already very close to it. It is, in short, only the beginning of a movement, which goes on gathering momentum and finally culminates in the Mahayana.

Not that the Indian philosophical tradition gains nothing from the Mahayanists. The very sophistication they add to the mode of philosophical discussions is evidence of their superb contribution to Indian philosophy. Still what the Indian philosophical tradition has to suffer from their revival of idealism and their elaborate defence of obscurantism must not be overlooked. And the main clue to this philosophical movement as a whole—to what is positive as well as what is negative in it—is to be sought in the withdrawal of the monk-philosophers from the life of normal activities to the seclusion of the all-found monasteries.

Subsisting wholly on the gifts of the merchants and kings, they are relieved of the worries of their own material existence. This creates the conditions for philosophical specialisation—the possibility of being concerned exclusively with learning and thinking, with discourse and debate—the conditions, in short, of raising philosophical activity to a higher level. This is what is positive in their contributions. They can now evolve new and much more crafty considerations not only in defence of their own outlook, but also in refutation of their opponents, creating thereby for these opponents the need of a better and sounder defence of their own positions.

Let us not forget however that there is also another side of the picture and it consists of the main theme or content of their philosophy. Relieved as they are of the need of

manual or material labour, they want to be totally aloof from it. This deprives them of a living contact with nature and, therefore, of the very spirit of interrogating nature in order to gain a better insight into it and its laws. Nature itself tends to vanish into nothingness in their philosophy and they dream of attaining freedom or *nirvana* just by forgetting the fact of nature being there. To understand their philosophy, therefore, it is not enough to follow the subtleties of their arguments. It is also necessary to see how much aloof they actually become from the labour of production, i.e. to see the actual conditions in which they philosophise in their monasteries.

We may be yet far from knowing the full details of the economic basis of all their monasteries and the mode of life therein. But at least certain broad facts about the Nalanda monastery are known. It is one of the most important centres of the activities of the Mahayana philosophers, so much so that Taranatha wants to connect practically all the leaders of Mahayana with it. Both Yuan-chuang and I-Tsing, the Chinese travellers to India in the seventh century AD, spend a fairly long time in this monastery and they leave some important information about it.

According to Yuan-chuang,[103] the monastery site is originally purchased by five hundred merchants at a cost of ten crores of gold pieces, and five kings in succession contribute to the construction of its magnificent halls, etc. which, during Yuan-chuang's stay there, accommodate about ten thousand students and fifteen hundred teachers! "Learning and discussing", says Yuan-chuang, "they find the day too short."

But how can so many people afford to live such a life of pure contemplation? I-Tsing[104] gives the answer to this. They maintain themselves, says he, from the revenue from two hundred villages gifted to the monastery by kings of different generations. Therefore there are surely several thousand of toilers, the surplus product of whose labour

103. Watters ii.164-5.

104. Takakusu 65.

enables these monks to free themselves fully from the responsibilities of direct production. And what is true of Nalanda is basically true also of the other monasteries.

Being thus fully free from the necessity of meeting their own material requirements, these monks—or, more strictly, a section of them—can afford the career of pure contemplation. If this alienation from manual labour creates for them the scope for philosophical specialisation, it also takes its revenge on their philosophy by condemning it to develop in a direction in which thought alone remains and the things thought of vanish into nothingness.

To sum up: the revival of philosophical idealism among the Mahayana Buddhists is no more a mystery than its first emergence in the consciousness of a section of the Upanisadic thinkers.

11. Samkara

We can now understand better why Samkara, while reasserting the Upanisadic idealism in its new and enriched form, finds it obligatory not only to borrow extensively the philosophical arguments from the Mahayana Buddhists, but also to imitate their basic organisational pattern—their monasteries—with provision for full-time specialists in pure speculations. On them alone can be entrusted the responsibility of carrying on the idealist tradition in Indian philosophy. The establishment by him of the four centres for Advaita Vedanta in the four corners of the country—which are consciously modelled on the Mahayana monasteries—is thus not unconnected with his reiteration of the basic arguments of the Mahayana philosophy, though with a great deal of sham contempt for the Mahayanists.

Chapter 5

SOCIAL FUNCTION OF INDIAN IDEALISM

1. Preliminary Remarks

Modern writers on traditional Indian philosophy have at best cursorily discussed its one peculiarity, which nevertheless needs some detailed examination because of its serious bearing on our understanding of the Indian philosophical situation. This peculiarity is perhaps best introduced with a few words on the impact on the philosophers of a clearly defined attitude of the law-givers to philosophical activity in general, or more specifically to 'free thinking' or an essentially rational approach to reality.

2. Law-Givers and Philosophers

Among the activities detested by our law-givers, a prominent one is 'free thinking'. By this they mean thinking outside the general structure of faith, or, in the way in which they put it, reasoning not in strict conformity to what is declared in the scriptures. Generally speaking, the Indian law-givers prohibit it with the same or similar strictness with which they prohibit a number of serious offences against law. In their list of crimes, therefore, 'free thinking' occurs rather freely. Though the different law-codes describe somewhat differently the magnitude of this particular crime, the penalty prescribed is nowhere light.

There can obviously be nothing in these legal recommendations to encourage the spirit of philosophical inquiry in the right sense. The law-givers do not create in the country an atmosphere favourable for the search for truth. This, as we shall see, is quite on the surface. But the question is: How do the philosophers react to it?

An open defiance of the law-givers is evidently risky, as is the defiance of the Church Fathers during the Inquisition of medieval Europe. At the same time, any hearty enthusiasm for these legal measures on the part of the philosophers can hardly be indicative of either their love of wisdom or desire for progress. And the fact is that Indian philosophers are clearly divided in their attitude to the law-givers and that this division is not unconnected with the fundamentals of their philosophy.

A section of Indian philosophers—notably the extreme idealists—approve of the legal measures against free thinking. To oblige the law-givers, they even go to the extent of inventing theoretical considerations to show that free thinking or uninhibited reasoning is intrinsically fallacious, and hence is not to be trusted. They cannot do this if it does not suit their own philosophical purpose. But the point is that it also suits the social and political purposes of the law-givers. This explains why the idealists receive a great deal of political boosting. The law-givers eagerly proclaim that their view represents the quintessence of wisdom.

Others among Indian philosophers—notably the plain-speaking materialists—strongly resent the tendency to stifle free thinking. Openly and bluntly they flout the law-givers and their measures against rationalism. They have naturally to face the consequences for this. Branded as veritable devils (*asura*-s) and captious reasoners (*vitandavadin*-s), they are sought to be driven out of social intercourse and their writings are withdrawn from circulation —perhaps deliberately destroyed. There may even be something in the story of burning them alive.[1]

But these plain-speaking materialists are not the only defenders of rationalism in Indian philosophy. There are others—the founders of logic and atomism—whose contribution to Indian rationalism is philosophically more important. Significantly, they find it safe to work only under the cover of transparent subterfuge. Though

1. Chattopadhyaya L 34.

in fact sharing a great deal with the materialists, they are evidently more cautious than the plain-speaking ones, with whom they dissociate themselves formally and sometimes emphatically. In accordance with the basic demands of the law-givers they even profess an apparent piety for the scriptures, though perhaps with the subtle hint that this is not to be taken very seriously. It is something like Descartes, scared by the news of his friend Galileo facing the Inquisition, rushing to the shrine of Our Lady of Loretto as a pilgrimage of gratitude for his discovery of analytic geometry. We shall have to see the advantage as well as the weakness of this way of evading the censorship of the law-givers.[2]

These are the three main attitudes of the Indian philosophers to the Indian law-givers. In the present chapter we shall discuss mainly the first of these, for that gives us the clue to the social function of Indian idealism.

3. Position of the Law-Givers

Let us first try to be clear about what the law-givers want.

The Indian law-givers, like their colleagues abroad, are obviously interested in the security of a social structure which is considered most desirable by them. Whether the society they speak of fully corresponds to reality is of course a different question. What primarily concerns us here is their norm—the way in which they want society to be organised. It is essentially in defence of this that they, without being themselves philosophers, feel the need of a definite stand on matters philosophical. In other words, the actual social organisation in different parts of ancient and medieval India may not—as a matter of fact does not—correspond in all details to the ideal society of our law-givers. But this does not prevent them from visualising a model society and as law-givers they are interested in philosophy in so far as it helps or hinders this model.

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2. See *infra* Chapter 6, sections 10-12.

Lest this is misunderstood, it is necessary to note here a few points. First, the ideal society our law-givers speak of is not a purely imaginary one. It does not exist only in the heads of the law-givers. At least some of its main features are features of an actual society that takes shape in the northern parts of India in the ancient period, for the law-givers themselves declare: 'The rule of conduct which prevails there is authoritative'.[3] Secondly, the social norm of the law-givers is not an invention of their own. Its essentials are already worked out by the authors of the *Brahmana*-s, who, as we have already seen, try to validate the new norm of the early state-powers that emerge on the ruins of the ancient tribal organisations. Thirdly, it is quite clear from treatises on political-economy like Kautilya's *Arthasastra* as well as a large number of inscriptional evidences[4] that one of the main functions of the states is always supposed to be the implementation and preservation of the social norm proclaimed by the Indian law-givers. Therefore, when we propose to discuss this mainly as a norm or political theory the implication is not that it is a mere abstract theory without relevance to actual social practice. Admitting that the law-givers' norm is never fully translated into reality, its impact on actual society is not to be underestimated. But it is convenient for our understanding of the Indian philosophical situation to concentrate on the law-givers' demand mainly in its theoretical aspect.

What then are its main points?

The political philosophy of the Indian law-givers is known as the *varnasrama* norm. It is usually understood as a model of four-caste society in which the duties and rights—the functions and aspirations—of an individual are automatically determined by his birth as a member of one of these castes. Though not wrong, such an understanding

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3. *BaudhayanaDS* i.1.2.9. For the geographical location of the model society of the law-givers, see Sircar 16f.

4. Sharma APIIAI 161.

of the *varnasrama* norm will be inadequate if it overlooks another important point, which is persistently emphasised by the law-givers. The four castes are to be viewed as forming two main classes in society.

These two classes into which the *varnasrama* norm requires society to be strictly divided are called *dvija*-s and *sudra*-s—the former literally meaning 'those that have two births', which the latter is not supposed to have. Let us see how the law-givers put this point.

Declares Manu,[5] "The Brahmin, the Ksatriya and the Vaisya castes are the twice-born ones (*dvija*-s). But the fourth, the Sudra, has one birth only. There is no fifth caste." Gautama[6] says, "The *sudra* belongs to the fourth caste, which has one birth only." According to the law-book of Visnu,[7] "Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras are the four castes. The first three of these are twice-born (*dvija*)."

The term *dvija* or twice-born is peculiar and needs some explanation. Added to their first birth in the mother's womb, the Brahmins, Ksatriyas and Vaisyas are supposed to have a second birth derived from the *upanayana* or initiation ritual. The *Aitareya Brahmana*[8] gives a vivid description of this mimatic rebirth. It is obviously based on the tribal initiation rite of dying and of being born again, though with an altered significance. The social function of the initiation rite in its original tribal stage[9] is to introduce the individual to the full tribal status and therefore also to the responsibilities of tribal life, inclusive of the responsibility of collective labour without which the tribe is threatened with extinction. However, as discussed in the *Aitareya Brahmana* onwards, this ritual of rebirth is transplanted in the new context of class society and its original significance passes into its opposite. It is now intended to introduce the individual to the full status of the privileged class, the general descriptive epithet of which is according-

5. *Manu* x.4. 6. *GautamaDS* x.50. 7. *VisnuDS* ii.1-2.
8. *Ait. Br.* 1.3. 9. Thomson AA 97ff.

ly the *dvija* or the twice-born. The initiation rite or *upanayana* being forbidden for the *sudra*, he has only one birth and is hence without the rights and privileges of the *dvija*.

This is an essential point about the *varnasrama* norm. The *dvija*—comprised of the priests, nobles and farmer-traders—is supposed to be the privileged class, though with varying degrees of privileges. The rest of the people are dumped under the general descriptive epithet *sudra*. But let us try to be clearer about this point. Since the priests, nobles and farmer-traders taken together can never form more than a small minority of any community visualised and since, moreover, manual labour—far from being expected is expressedly prohibited for them by the law-givers as far as possible,[10] we have to admit that in the political philosophy of the Indian law-givers the word *sudra* stands for the vast majority of the direct producers.

The concept of the surplus product of labour—i.e. the product of labour which is more than the bare need of keeping the toilers alive—may not be known to the Indian law-givers in the sense in which we understand it today. Nevertheless, from the way in which they formulate the rights and duties of the *sudra*-s it is clear that they want the entire surplus produced by the *sudra*-s to go to the privileged class. The only occupation fit for the *sudra* is that of serving the others i.e. the *dvija*-s, for, as Manu[11] says, "whatever else besides this he may perform will bear him no fruit". For rendering this service, they are to be kept alive no doubt. But it is specified that the *sudra*-s are not allowed to enjoy anything more than is necessary for keeping them barely alive. The minimum standard of life which the law-givers can think of is prescribed for them, evidently implying that the rest of the product of their labour is to be usurped by the *dvija*-s. Let us see how the law-givers put this. Manu says,

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10. Passages prohibiting manual labour for *dvija*-s quoted Chattopadhyaya IP 86ff.

11. *Manu* x.123.

One occupation only the Lord prescribed to the *sudra*—to serve meekly even these other three castes.[12]

But a *sudra,* whether bought or unbought, he may compel to do servile work; for he was created by the Self-existent (Svayambhu) to be the slave of a Brahmin. A *sudra,* though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free from it?[13]

No collection of wealth must be made by a *sudra,* even though he be able to do it; for a *sudra* who has acquired wealth gives pain to the Brahmins.[14]

But a *sudra,* being unable to find service with the twice-born and threatened with the loss of his sons and wife through hunger, may maintain himself by handicrafts. Let him follow those mechanical occupations and those various crafts by following which the *dvija*-s are best served.[15]

Ordinarily, however —Manu[16] specifically says—for the services rendered by the *sudra,* he is to be fed only with the leftovers or chaff; he is to be allowed only tattered rags for wearing and at best wornout mats for sleeping. About the *sudra,* Gautama[17] declares,

For him also are prescribed truthfulness, meekness and purity... He shall...serve the higher castes. From them he shall seek to obtain his livelihood. He shall use their cast-off shoes, umbrellas, garments and mats. And eat the remnant of their food. And he may live by practising crafts.

To specify the spiritual and cultural status of the *sudra,* the same law-giver declares:[18]

Now, if he listens intentionally to the recitation of the Veda, his ears shall be filled with molten lead or lac. If he recites Vedic texts, his tongue shall be cut out. If he remembers them, his body shall be split in twain. If he assumes a position equal to the *dvija*-s in sitting, in lying down, in conversation or on the road, he shall undergo corporal punishment.

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12. *Ib.* i.91. 13. *Ib.* viii.413-4.
14. *Ib.* x.129. 15. *Ib.* x.99-100. 16. *Ib.* x.125.
17. *GautamaDS* x.51-60. 18. *Ib.* xii. 4-7.

It is not necessary to quote more from the law-givers. But it is necessary to reiterate the essential point of their political philosophy. They want society to be sharply divided into two classes—*dvija* and *sudra*—so sharply indeed that even the physical touch of the latter is pollution for the former. Of these two, *dvija* stands for the privileged class and is on the whole expected to be aloof from the labour of production. The rest of the people—the vast majority of direct producers—are the *sudra*-s, whose social, economic and cultural privileges are practically nil.

Such then is the ideal society visualised by the law-givers. What motivates them to develop an intense hostility to free thinking or rationalism is not difficult to understand. Violence apart, one thing is badly needed to maintain a society in which the vast millions of toiling masses are to be kept reconciled to servitude—to produce the wealth of the nation while receiving nothing more than is necessary for bare existence. This something is superstition on a really big scale. Rationalism being destructive of superstition can hardly be to the taste of the Indian law-givers.

4. Social Function of Superstition

For a brilliantly lucid analysis of the social function of superstition, we may for a while leave the Indian law-givers and turn to some early Greek thinkers who, largely because of the tradition of the ancient Ionian scientists, can very clearly identify superstition as superstition.

Farrington[19] observes,

A sophisticated Greek of the fourth century BC cast a glance at the official religion of Egypt and detected its social utility. The Egyptian law-giver, he remarks, had established so many contemptible superstitions first 'because he thought it proper to accustom the masses to obeying any command that was given to them by their superiors', and second, 'because he judged that he could rely on those who

19. Farrington GS 34-35.

displayed their piety to be equally law-abiding in every other particular'.

The sophisticated Greek referred to is Isocrates, a contemporary of Plato. Plato himself, in his *Laws*, shows for the same reason the same admiration for the same petrified culture of ancient Egypt.[20]

— What are the legal provisions for such matters in Egypt?

— Most remarkable. They recognised long ago the principle we are discussing, that the young must be habituated to the use of beautiful designs and melodies. They have established their norms and displayed them in the temples, and no artist is permitted in any of the arts to make any innovation or introduce any new forms in place of the traditional ones. You will find that the works of art produced there today are made in the same style, neither better nor worse, as those which were made ten thousand years ago—without any exaggeration, ten thousand years.

— Very remarkable.

— Rather, I should say, extremely politic and statemanlike. . .

And, already in the *Republic*, long before he writes the *Laws*, Plato[21] says,

— Well, said I, how can we contrive one of those expedient falsehoods we were speaking of just now, one noble falsehood, which we may persuade the whole community, including the Rulers themselves, if possible, to accept?

Another Greek statesman, Polybius, who is brought to Rome as a hostage in 168 BC, becomes a great admirer of the Roman ways. He expresses strong disapproval of the tendency of some of his own countrymen to encourage free thinking, and this precisely for the reason for which Isocrates and Plato look back so admiringly at the use of superstition by the ancient Egyptians. Observes Polybius,[22]

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20. Quoted by Thomson SAGS ii.324-25.
21. *Republic* 414 b.
22. Quoted by Farrington HHAG 102.

I will venture the assertion that what the rest of mankind deride is the foundation of Roman greatness, namely superstition. This element has been introduced into every aspect of their private and public life, with every artifice to awe the imagination, in a degree which could not be improved upon. Many possibly will be at a loss to understand this, but my view is that it has been done to impress the masses. If it were possible to have a state in which all the citizens were philosophers, perhaps we might dispense with this sort of thing. But the masses in every state are unstable, full of lawless desires, of irrational anger and violent passion. All that can be done then is to hold them in check by fears of the unseen and other shams of the same sort. It was not for nothing but with deliberate design that the men of old introduced to the masses the notions about gods and the concepts of the afterlife. The folly and heedlessness is ours, who seek to dispel such illusions.

Writing about 30 BC, the geographer Strabo[23] harps on the same theme:

Poets were not alone in giving currency to myths. Long before the poets, cities and their law-givers had sanctioned them as a useful expedient. They had some insight into the emotional nature of the rational animal. Illiterate and uneducated men, they argued, are no better than children and, like them, are fond of stories. When, through descriptive narratives or other forms of representational art, they learn how terrible are divine punishments and threats, they are deterred from their evil courses. No philosopher by means of a reasoned exhortation can move a crowd of women or any random mob to reverence, piety and faith. He needs to play upon their superstition also, and this cannot be done without myths and marvels. It was, then, as bugbears to scare the simple-minded that founders of states gave their sanction to these things. This is the function of mythology and it accordingly came to have its recognized place in the ancient plan of civil society as well as in the explanations of the nature of reality.

In the writings of the Indian law-givers we do not have such a clear discussion of superstition as an instrument for policing the state. But this does not mean that the ancient

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23. Quoted by Farrington GS 253.

Indian politicians are not aware of the social function of superstition. An example of this awareness, which remains scattered in Kautilya's *Arthasastra* is brilliantly analysed by R. S. Sharma. His chapter on *Religion and Politics in the Arthasastra of Kautilya* needs to be read in full. We have scope here to quote only some of his observations contained in the second section of this chapter, which is given the subtitle *Superstition and Politics.*

A striking example of the practical character of the statecraft of Kautilya is his lack of faith in the efficacy of certain religious practices, and his exploitation of the credulous beliefs of the people for promoting the interests of the state, internal as well as external. Internally several superstitious devices are suggested by him for augmenting the royal treasury. For instance, on some nights the king may set up a god or a sacred shrine, or may point out an evil omen, and then either for the sake of worshipping the god or for averting the calamity, he may appropriate the collections raised on the pretext of holding congregations and processions. He may use the untimely appearance of flowers and fruits in the temple garden to his advantage and may declare the arrival of a god on this basis. A spy in the guise of a Raksasa (demon) demanding a daily tribute of human beings may appear in the tree, and a false panic may be raised that an evil spirit has appeared. Thus a subscription may be raised from the people of the capital and countryside under the pretext of warding off evil spirits. It seems that some of these measures were really put into effect. We learn from Patanjali that the images set up by the Maurya kings served as a source of income on account of their sale, and also provided livelihood through the offerings that were made to it.[24]

Some of the devices suggested by Kautilya—though quite crude—have the double purpose of not only creating a superstitious awe among the people but also of physically eliminating the actual and potential propagandists against superstitions. Continues Sharma,[25]

Those who are sceptics may be administered a poisonous drink or may be sprinkled over with poisonous water to

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24. Sharma APIIAI 192-93. 25. *Ib.* 193.

render them senseless, and then the spies may attribute their insensibility to the curse of gods. Similarly, spies may cause the condemner of the god to be bitten by a cobra, and may ascribe this to the curse of the god. Further, under the pretext of adopting remedial measures against this ominous phenomenon, they may raise collections for filling the treasury. Obviously the object in the last two cases is to coerce the rational elements into submission to superstitious practices and payment of money to the government. Thus all these devices enumerated by Kautilya are to be used by the state for fleecing the people by playing upon their superstition.

What makes Kautilya's work such an important document for our present discussion is that he himself does not believe in any superstitious nonsense nor does he want his rulers to subscribe to such belief. On the contrary, as we shall later see, he wants his rulers to be thoroughly trained in logic and the most rational philosophical views known to him. Only thus can they raise themselves above any religious scruple and consciously utilise the religious scruples of the masses for keeping them subdued. Thus on the one hand he says that the rulers should take special care in establishing temples with images of gods. On the other hand from the free use of these temples and images recommended by him for achieving the most unscrupulous ends it is clear that Kautilya wants his rulers to be fully uninhibited by religious views.[26]

He lays down a number of contrivances for destroying the enemy in those places of worship and pilgrimage which he frequents out of faith. To enumerate these contrivances, a wall or stone may be let fall on the head of the enemy when he has entered a temple... Weapons concealed inside the body of an idol may be hurled at his head. It is also laid down that when the enemy visits a temple or ascetics, spies hidden in underground chambers or somewhere else may strike him. Kautilya also provides that poisoned rice and water may be served in feeding the enemy's people in honour of gods or ancestors, and in conspiracy with traitors to his enemy he may strike the enemy

26. *Ib.* 194-95.

with his concealed army. Further, if the fort is surrounded by the enemy, the ruler may lie concealed in a hole bored in the body of the idol.

We shall mention here only another feature of the deliberate use of superstition advocated by Kautilya. Sharma[27] observes that "neither Kautilya himself believes in the genuineness of the royal divinity and omniscience nor does he want the ruler to subscribe to this nonsense". But the politician knows well the importance of "getting his omniscience and association with divinities proclaimed."[28] Therefore the problem is: How to get these myths proclaimed or widely propagated among the people? Kautilya suggests mainly two methods for the purpose. First, to use certain transparent tricks[29] and an extensive espionage machinery for collecting information to be faked as the king's marvellous knowledge. Secondly, to use a highly organised propaganda machinery for the purpose. We shall quote here Sharma's comment mainly on the latter.[30]

As many as seven classes of officials, astrologers, soothsayers, horologists, Pauranikas (story-tellers), Iksanikas (probably a type of astrologers), spies and Sacivyakaras (companions of ministers) are to be pressed into the service of the state for the purpose. As the first four of these are mentioned elsewhere in the *Arthasastra* as members of the priestly class, this testifies to the important role of the priests in moulding public opinion. They are to give wide publicity to the superhuman powers of the king throughout his territory. Similarly in foreign countries they are to spread the news of gods appearing before the king and of his having received from heaven the power of the sword (*aanda*) and the power of the purse (*kosa*), the two important elements of the state... A trick suggested by Kautilya is to damage the images of gods, from which blood may be caused to flow out in floods; spies may then represent this as an indication of defeat to the enemy...

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27. *Ib.* 197. 28. Kautilya *AS* xiii.1.1.

29. Kautilya *AS* xiii. cf the use of science and technology in Alexandria as tricks for producing religious awe in the people—Farrington GS 199.

30. Sharma APIIAI 196-97.

(Thus) he wants...by means of skilful propaganda carried on by a well-organised machinery, the masses should be impressed with the all-knowing and divine character of the conqueror, so that his own people might support him whole-heartedly in his aggressive designs, and those of the enemy might transfer their allegiance to the new conqueror.

But let us return to the law-givers proper—the authors of the *dharma-sastra*. They do not have the cynicism of Kautilya to suggest that the rulers themselves must have a thorough rationalist training so that they can make the full political use of superstitions without any religious scruple of their own. But this does not mean that they show no awareness of the social function of superstition. Conscious as they are of the basic problem of keeping the masses under control, they do not commit the folly or heedlessness of allowing any tendency to question the venerable illusions that create security for the privileged minority—the illusions namely about gods and after-life. Disbelief in these, they know, threaten the very foundation of the society they visualise so fondly. Thus, it is declared by Manu,[31] the state that is infested by disbelievers perishes in no time. This, the commentators feel, is in need of some explanation. One of them, Medhatithi, explains: "By the destruction of the state is meant the ruin of the rulers thereof. This is illustrated with the case of being infested with disbelievers (*nastika*-s). That means, being infested by the materialists (*lokayatikas*) etc., who deny after-life." Another commentator, Kullukabhatta, reiterates: being infested by the disbelievers means being infested by those who deny after-life.

All these are thus only the negative way of putting what Isocrates, Plato, Polybius and Strabo want to put in the positive form. If the want of belief in after-life etc. means the insecurity for the state or for the rulers thereof, the clear implication is that the belief in these is a need for the security of the state. The only point on which the Greek statesmen—and perhaps also Kautilya—differ from the

31. *Manu* viii.22.

Indian law-givers is that the former are too sophisticated to overlook the fact that such beliefs are crass superstitions or venerable illusions deliberately designed to keep the masses under control. For the Indian law-givers all these are venerable truths that remain revealed in the scriptures. In other words, the Indian law-givers not only feel the need of the myths about after-life etc., but also a further myth to justify these myths. In this, they resemble more the ancient Egyptian law-givers, whose technique the sophisticated Greeks so much admire.

Significantly, the concern felt by the Indian law-givers for the disbelievers is not unconnected with the concern they feel for the possible political power of the manual workers, whom they know as the *sudra*-s. "Let him not", declares Manu,[32] "dwell in a country where the rulers are *sudra*-s, nor in one surrounded by the unrighteous men, nor in one which is subject to the heretics, nor in one swarming with men of the lowest caste."

5. Law-Givers Against Free Thinking

With the awareness of the social function of superstition, the Indian law-givers dilate much on the undesirability of free thinking, frequently associating—and even identifying—it with the tendency to subscribe to the materialist outlook. In an oft-quoted passage Manu[33] declares, "One should not even speak with the heretics, the transgressors of the caste discipline, the hypocrites, the free thinkers and the double dealers."

The word rendered here is 'free thinkers' is *haituka*, which ordinarily means the logicians. But there are reasons to take the word in its present context not in the sense of logicians in general but in the more restricted sense of those who refuse to restrain logic within the bounds of faith. In the language of some idealist philosophers they are those who—instead of making logic scrupulously sub-

32. *Ib.* iv.61.

33. *Ib.* iv.30.

servient to the scriptures—insist on allowing it an independent efficacy of its own. The admission of an independent efficacy of logic is for the law-givers—and, as we shall presently see, also for the idealist philosophers—quite dangerous, because it entails the risk of questioning the authority of the scriptures. This point is important and S. N. Dasgupta rightly wants to be clear about it. In the declaration of Manu just quoted, observes Dasgupta,[34] the word *haituka* is to be taken not in its ordinary sense but in the sense of those "who indulged in all kinds of free discussions", for it is clear from certain other statements of the same law-giver that he has nothing against those that agree to allow logic the restricted function of following the footsteps of faith. Thus, in short, Manu has no objection to a thinker as such; what he objects to is the dangerous brand of thinkers known as the 'free thinkers'.

Two propositions immediately follow. From the point of view of the genuine logicians, the only function of logic considered legitimate by the law-givers is nothing but the perversion of its real function, namely the rationalisation of faith. From the point of view of the law-givers, however, the genuine function of logic—i.e. the function of thinking and reasoning without being inhibited by superstitions—has the most undesirable social consequences. We shall presently see how enthusiastically the Indian idealists support the second of these two propositions, showing thereby the social significance of their own attitude. For the present let us try to be clearer about the law-givers.

The commentators of Manu are naturally anxious to explain in some details the social undesirability of free thinking. Commenting on the statement of Manu just quoted, Medhatithi says, "The free thinkers (*haituka*) mean nothing but the disbelievers (*nastika*). These people are firmly convinced that there is no after-life, no merit in offering gifts to the priests and no efficacy of the sacrificial oblations." Kullukabhatta simply equates the *haituka* to those

34. Dasgupta iii.518.

that employ reason against the authority of the scriptures. The difference between these two interpretations is only apparent, for the law-givers want us to believe that the scriptures or Vedas are concerned only with after-life, gods, gifts and sacrifices. Questioning the authority of the scriptures means for them the same as questioning the belief in all these venerable superstitions. Free thinking is an evil, because by fomenting the spirit of questioning these venerable superstitions, it threatens the security of their ideal society.

6. Concepts of the Nastika and Astika

We can now understand how the concepts *nastika* and *astika* acquire in Indian philosophy their peculiar significance. The significance is due to the dictation of Manu[35] for whom *nastika* or disbeliever is only a synonym for *haituka* or free thinker, i.e., only a bad name for the thinker. If however *nastika* or disbeliever is a bad name for a philosopher, its opposite—namely *astika* or the believer in the scriptural authority of the Vedas—naturally means the desirable type of thinker from the law-giver's standpoint.

It is therefore much to the shame of our orthodox philosophical tradition that this dictation of the law-giver acquires for it an absolute philosophical significance as it were. It becomes the basic criterion for the classification of philosophical views into *astika* and *nas'ika*—the former meaning those philosophies that pledge loyalty to the scriptures or specifically to the Vedas, and the latter meaning those that refuse to pledge any such loyalty.

Surprisingly enough, even modern writers on traditional Indian philosophy generally accept this classification of Indian philosophical views, and this in spite of being aware that the criterion on which it is based has the ugly history of being evolved neither by the philosophers nor by the philologists but by the law-givers, whose own interest

35. *Manu* ii.11.

in philosophy is at best extra-philosophical. As eminent a historian of Indian philosophy as S. N. Dasgupta[36], while discussing the meaning of the word *nastika,* says, "But we have the definition in Manu's own words as one who controverts the Vedic doctrine (*veda-nindaka*)." But why should the modern scholars attach so much importance to Manu even for the purpose of the basic philosophical classification, knowing full well that Manu is just a law-giver? One of the most important reasons for this, as we shall presently see, is that Samkara shows the greatest respect for Manu and our modern scholars, in their turn, are usually full of admiration for Samkara. This is how, without himself being a philosopher, Manu acquires a great deal of authority also in matters philosophical. Even the contemporary interpreters of Indian philosophy fail to outgrow the spell of Manu on them.

7. Reason at the Mercy of Myth

To resume our main discussion. From the legal point of view, the only legitimate function of reason—of logic—is that of serving the supreme wisdom supposed to be contained in the Veda. From what we have already discussed about Vedic literature, however, it is obvious that any talk of wisdom characteristic of Veda as a whole is at best a myth. The dominant philosophical outlook contained in the later portions of this vast literature is in violent opposition to the general theoretical temper of the genuinely earlier Vedic songs. But the law-givers themselves do not bother. One reason for this is that they impose severe restrictions to the study of the Veda. Only those who are supposed to agree with the basic interests of the law-givers—particularly the priests and nobles—are entitled to read this literature. As Marx[37] says, "the Indian...Brahmin...proves

36. Dasgupta iii.519. This is all the more amazing because Dasgupta is fully aware of the fact that Manu gives this new meaning to the word *nastika* in open violation of the older grammarians and philologists, who are primarily responsible for fixing the meaning of words.

37. Marx OR 27.

the holiness of the Vedas by reserving for himself alone the right to read it." The other reason for this is that the law-givers are not really interested in the actual contents of the Veda. What they are interested instead is Veda as a political institution—an instrument which can be effectively used to keep the people under control with the fear of the other world and gods etc. which therefore they boldly proclaim as the supreme wisdom supposed to be contained in the Veda. Since they rely so much on fear to keep people under control, what they are themselves afraid of is free thinking or reasoning without inhibition, which can easily blow off the myths on which they rely. For them therefore reason is all right only in so far as it is kept crippled under the load of the scriptural authority. This they approve of as the only legitimate function of rational faculty.

So Manu shows a tolerance for logic (*anviksiki*), but this only in so far as it is an aid to the understanding of the scriptural doctrine of the soul and its salvation. In a passage frequently quoted, he declares that the branches of knowledge worthy of being studied are the Vedas, state-craft, economics and logic—the last strictly as an auxiliary to the doctrine of the soul (*anviksikincatma-vidyam*).[38] This passage is sometimes misunderstood and is taken to mean as if Manu prescribes several independent branches of knowledge, of which one is logic without any qualification. But the commentator Medhatithi already warns us against such a misunderstanding of the law-giver. He says that the word for logic (*anviksiki* = *tarkavidya*), as occurring in the passage, is to be understood strictly as related to *adhyatma-vidya* or *atma-vidya*, i.e. to the doctrine of the soul and its salvation, and must not be taken in the sense of free thinking—the sense in which the heretics and materialists want to take it.

That this is Manu's real point is corroborated by a number of his other declarations. Elsewhere, he speaks of "reasoning that must not be in any conflict with the

38. *Manu* vii.43.

Vedas."[39] Explaining the norm of right conduct, he repeats[40]: "Let him avoid disbelief, cavilling at the Veda, contempt for gods, hatred, want of modesty, pride, anger and harshness." Again, "Those Brahmins are to be considered ideal who, in accordance with the sacred law, have studied the Veda along with its appendages, and who live such a model life as to adduce by it perceptual proof, as it were, for the revealed character of the scriptures (*sruti-pratyaksa-hetavah*)."[41] None, according to him, is entitled to teach logic who is not already well-versed in the scriptures, for the teacher of logic is supposed to teach it along with the scriptures and in accordance with the doctrine of the supreme self.[42] And following is the ideal study-course that he recommends: "Let him constantly recite the Veda which refers to sacrifice and to the gods, and which treats of the soul as expounded in the Upanisads (Vedanta)."[43] It remains for us to see what an abject gratitude is felt by the later representatives of Vedanta for thus boosting the prototype of their philosophical position.

8. Free Thinking as a Crime

If the legitimate function of logic is to remain docile to the scriptures, it easily follows that its essentially illegitimate function is to claim an autonomy of its own. In the judgment of the law-givers such an autonomy imputed to logic is nothing short of a crime. Thus they are led to include free thinking in their list of the recognised forms of crime.

"By *sruti*", says Manu,[44] "is to be understood the Veda and by *smrti* the legal codes. These two being the sources of law must not be judged by adverse arguments. If a person, with a greater confidence in logic, disregards the Veda and the legal codes, he is to be considered a disbeliever (*nastika*). Even if such a person be a Brahmin, he must be thrown out of society." Manu, it is well-

39. *Ib.* xii.106. 40. *Ib.* iv.163. 41. *Ib.* xii.109.
42. *Ib.* vii.43. 43. *Ib.* vi.83. 44. *Ib.* ii.10-11.

known, would not ordinarily talk of punishing a Brahmin. But what can he do if a Brahmin, blind to what is good to his own class interest, commits the crime of having greater confidence in logic than in the scriptures and the legal codes?

The gravity of this particular crime is to be judged from the way in which it is sought to be equated to certain other forms of transgressing the law. "The five great crimes (*mahapataka*-s)", declares Manu,[45] "are killing a Brahmin, getting drunk, stealing, committing adultery with the preceptor's wife and being an accessory to such offences... Forgetting the Veda, reviling the Veda, giving false evidence, slaying a friend, eating forbidden food or things unfit to be used as food are six offences equal to getting drunk." This passage is to be understood in the context of what is already discussed, namely that from the law-giver's point of view the difference between 'free thinking' and 'reviling the Veda' is really not there.

The law book attributed to Yajnavalkya[46] is perhaps more explicit. According to it, as a crime the act of questioning the Veda hardly differs from that of killing a Brahmin—the gravest crime that the law-givers can imagine. In the law-code of Gautama,[47] the same is equated to both the crimes of murdering a Brahmin and getting drunk. The *Visnu-dharma-sutra*[48] too refers to the same crime, though without inflating its gravity so much. *Vasistha-dharma-sutra*[49] simply declares that utter ruin awaits those that flout the scriptures: "to hold the Vedas as unauthoritative, to carp at the words of the sages and to be wavering on all points lead one to destruction."

9. The Technique of Mass-propaganda

It is interesting to note here a difficult problem faced by the law-givers in this connection. How are the toiling

45. *Ib* xi. 55 & 57. 46. *Yaj. Sam.* iii.288.
47. Kane HD ii.358. 48. *Ib.* 49. *Ib.*

millions in the country to be accustomed to the extreme undesirability of free thinking which easily leads to the spirit of questioning the scriptures? The problem is a formidable one, not only because these toiling millions—the *sudra*-s of the law-givers—are denied even a minimum education but because, according to the claims of the law-givers themselves, their legal codes have some kind of scriptural status (*smrti*, though not *sruti*), while the *sudra*-s are too polluted to study the scriptures. Thus the undesirability of free thinking, if confined to the law codes alone, can hardly be expected to have any direct impact on the minds of the masses. Yet the masses are somehow or other to be told bout this, because it is primarily for the purpose of keeping them under control that the law-givers are so enthusiastic to ban free thinking. How is this problem to be solved?

It is solved by the redactors of the Indian epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.

The role of the Indian epics as media for mass-propaganda is generally admitted. By the recital of these particularly in the rural areas of the country certain values—both theoretical and practical—are sought to be firmly fixed in the minds of the masses. It needs to be noted in this connection that the redactors of the epics take special care to cram into these all the values that are considered important by the law-givers. As Kane[50] says, "The two epics of India...contain...numerous passages bearing on many topics of the *dharma-sastra* (law-codes) and were relied upon as authorities in medieval and later works." *Mahabharata*[51] itself claims that among the subjects on which it is an authority, the first place is that of the *dharma-sastra*. Further, Kane[52] points out, "the *Mahabharata* had become, long before the seventh century AD, a work for popular education, and was being recited before general audiences of men and women in India, as

50. Kane in ABORI, 1966. 11.
51. *Mbh* Adi ii.83.
52. Kane *op.cit.*

in the nineteenth century." The same is true of *Ramayana*, the impact of which on popular consciousness is perhaps greater, because people are made to believe that Rama, the hero of this epic, is an incarnation of God.

What is the attitude to free thinking embodied in these epics? Here are just two examples.

In *Mahabharata*, Bhisma delivers a long sermon to Yudhisthira in the course of which he narrates an interesting parable, known as the parable of Indra and Kasyapa. Once upon a time a merchant, arrogant of his immense wealth, runs his chariot over a Brahmin of the Kasyapa clan. The latter thinks that since there is no redress to such an injustice, life is not worth living at all. So he is about to commit suicide. To prevent him from doing this, Indra, in the guise of a jackal, appears before him and describes to him at great length the miseries of being born as a low animal. His main point is that the great fortune of being born as a human being—particularly as a Brahmin—is too precious to be deliberately destroyed. But this jackal, as he says, is not always a jackal. In the previous birth, he was a human being, and hence did not suffer the agonies of the animal existence. He was condemned to be reborn as a low animal because of a grave sin committed by him during the previous human existence. It is the sin of being a free thinker or a logician freely questioning the scriptures on the strength of reason alone. As the jackal puts it:[53]

(In the previous life) I was attached to logic, the technique of fruitless argumentations (*anviksikim tarka-vidyam anurakto nirarthakam*). I was a scholar in a degraded sense, because in the capacity of a free thinker (*haituka*). I was a vilifier of the Veda (*veda-ninaka*). In the assemblies I used to put forth all sorts of logical considerations, which was the most improper thing to do. I used to refute the Brahmins and was hostile to what the Brahmins said. I was a disbeliever (*nastika*) and I entertained doubt about everything. Hence, I was just a fool

53. *Mbh* Santi cviii.47-9.

with pretentions to learning. Oh Brahmins, this life of the jackal which I am now suffering is the result of all this.

Can the horror of free thinking be better described for popular consumption?

In the *Ramayana,* the same denunciation of free thinking is more directly expressed, though this time with the additional suggestion that free thinking has the inherent tendency to develop into the materialist outlook. Thus, in the course of advising how ideally to rule the kingdom, Rama advises Bharata.[54]

Oh dear, never entertain a Brahmin that follows the materialists. They are experts only in bringing disasters. Though with the pretention to learning, they are but fools like the babies. In spite of there being the supremely important works on law, these fools allow their intellect to remain at the mercy of logic and declare these (law-codes) to be just useless.

10. The Philosophical Situation

The fact that genuine philosophical activity continues in the country and that it usually takes the form of a lively clash of ideas originating in doubt (*samsaya*), proves that the law-givers cannot completely stifle free thinking. But this does not mean that their destructive influence on the Indian philosophical situation is to be minimised. One important factor that aids it is the enthusiasm of a section of philosophers for the law-givers and their recommendations. An equally important factor that infuses vitality into the philosophical activity is the way in which another section of philosophers either openly flouts the law-givers and their myths or somehow manages to hoodwink them with an apparent piety for the scriptures.

The point to be specially noted is that these attitudes of the philosophers are not arbitrary. These are on the contrary clearly related to the two basic standpoints in Indian philosophy—idealism and its antithesis.

54. *Ramayana* Ayodhya c.38-9.

11. Law-givers and Idealist Philosophers

Among the Indian idealists, the way in which the Mahayana Buddhists want to render faithful service to the law-givers and their demand for fideism will be taken up a little later, because of the indirectness and complexity of their method of doing this. It will be a methodological advantage to begin with what is crudely obvious. And that is the case of the Advaita Vedantists, whose anxiety to endorse the demands of the law-givers amounts almost to a form of vulgar servility.

Among the Advaita Vedantists, the most influential philosopher is Samkara and his greatest work on philosophy is the commentary on *Brahma-sutra,* popularly known as *Vedanta-bhasya.* Therefore, for the purpose of understanding the attitude of the Advaita Vedantists to the law-givers, we may reasonably concentrate on the internal evidences of this work.

The first question naturally is: What is Samkara's general attitude to the law-givers, or more specifically to the greatest of them, Manu? Samkara leaves nothing vague about it. He quotes[55] with great gusto an old saying: "Whatever Manu said is medicine." For Samkara the validity of this declaration is absolute, for it is supposed to form part of the scriptural revelation.[56] In accordance with this, he does something which—to say the least—is most peculiar for a philosopher. He quotes the authority of the law-giver as the decisive proof both in refutation and in substantiation of philosophical positions. In the commentary on *Brahma-sutra,* he uses the opinion of Manu as one of the strongest evidences against the Samkhya view of Kapila and in favour of his own Advaita view. "Manu himself", he declares,[57] "where he glorifies the seeing of the One Self in everything, implicitly blames the doctrine of Kapila . . . The system of Kapila contradicts the Veda and the doctrine of Manu, who follows the Veda." This is asto-

55. Samkara on *Br Su* ii.1.2. 56. Kane HD i.136.
57. Samkara on *Br Su* ii.1.2.

nishing, because Manu is not a philosopher at all. Still Samkara thinks that the validity of a philosophical view is ultimately at the mercy of the law-giver's taste or distaste for it.

It will be tedious to quote here all the passages in which Samkara shows his great admiration for everything that Manu says. We quote Kane[58] who briefly sums it up: "Samkaracarya, in his *Vedanta-bhasya*, quotes *Manu-smrti* very frequently... In his *bhasya* (commentary) on the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*, he quotes Manu dozens of times... He looks upon the *Manu-smrti* as one of the authorities on which the author of the *Vedanta-sutra* relies."

12. Class Contempt of Samkara

Before proceeding further, let us try to be clearer here about one question. What is it that unites the philosopher with the law-giver so intimately?

The question is important. Manu is just a law-giver. Still he shows some interest in philosophy. This interest is necessarily secondary. Anxious above all in defending the ideal society he visualises, he takes interest in philosophy only in so far as it helps or hinders the cause of this ideal society. But Samkara is a philosopher. His primary interest is the defence of a particular view of reality. What is the significance of his wholesale admiration for Manu? Can it be that just as Manu is interested in supporting the prototype of the Advaita Vedanta as an ideological security for his social norm, so also is Samkara interested in Manu's sociology, because he thinks that only this can ensure his philosophy with the material security it evidently needs?

Modern admirers of Samkara do not like us to raise such an impious question. But the question can hardly be evaded, for the fact is that Samkara does subscribe also

58. Kane HD i.145

to a sociology and that this sociology is saturated with the same class contempt as that of Manu.

We do not have to look for Samkara's sociology outside his philosophical *magnum opus*. In his commentary on *Brahma-sutra* itself, Samkara offers his best defence of both his philosophy and his sociology. In his own intention, therefore, the two are not to be separately understood. We cannot hope to understand his philosophy without taking note of his sociology .

We have to discuss Samkara's sociology in the stereotyped terminology of the Indian law-givers, from whom he borrows it. In this terminology, society is supposed to be divided into two main classes—*dvija*-s and *sudra*-s. The supremacy of the *dvija*-s is taken for granted by Samkara throughout his writings. We have to consider here specially his attitude to the *sudra*-s. Samkara devotes an entire section of his commentary on *Brahma-sutra*[59] to explain this.

The main point he wants to establish is that the *sudra* is not entitled to philosophical wisdom in Samkara's sense. Thus put, the point may appear to be rather trifling. From Samkara's standpoint, however, its real implication is devastating. In his view, this philosophical wisdom—and this alone—can lead one to real freedom or liberation. If, therefore, the *sudra* is by nature debarred from the philosophical wisdom he speaks of, the clear corollary is that the question of the *sudra* ever attaining real freedom does not arise. Living thus under eternal bondage, the *sudra* is supposed eternally to serve the *dvija*-s for, as Manu already declares "whatever else besides this the *sudra* does will bear him no fruit."

But why are the *sudra*-s not entitled to philosophical wisdom? Samkara[60] answers: "the *sudra*-s have no such claim, on account of their not studying the Veda. A person who has studied the Veda and understood its sense is indeed qualified for Vedic matters. But a *sudra* does not study the Veda, for such study demands as its antece-

59. Samkara on *Br Su* i.3.34ff. 60. *Ib.* i.3.34.

dent the *upanayana* ceremony (i.e. the initiation ritual conferring on one the status of the *dvija*) and that ceremony belongs to the three higher castes only."

All this may appear to us to be a series of mere assumptions. Not so for Samkara, for whom, being prescribed by the law-givers, this has the most infallible authority. As he puts it, "With reference to the *sudra*-s, on the other hand, the absence of ceremonies is frequently mentioned; so, for instance, *Manu*, x.4, where they are spoken of as 'once born' only, and *Manu* x. 126, 'A *sudra* cannot commit an offence causing loss of caste (*pataka*), and he is not worthy to receive the sacraments."[61]

But this is not all. Samkara finds it necessary to dilate on the point:[62]

The *sudra*-s are not qualified for that reason also that *Smrti* prohibits their hearing the Veda, their studying the Veda, and their understanding and performing Vedic matters. The prohibition of hearing the Veda is conveyed by the following passages:

'The ears of him who hears the Veda are to be filled with (molten) lead and lac', and

'For a *sudra* is (like) a cemetery, therefore, (the Veda) is not to be read in the vicinity of a *sudra*'.

From this latter passage the prohibition of studying the Veda results at once; for how should he study scripture in whose vicinity it is not even to be read? There is, moreover, an express prohibition (of the *sudra* studying the Veda).

'His tongue is to be slit if he pronounces it: his body is to be cut through if he preserves it.'

The prohibition of hearing and studying the Veda already imply the prohibition of the knowledge and performance of Vedic matters; there are, however, express prohibitions also, such as

'He is not to impart knowledge to the *sudra*', and
'To the twice-born belong study, sacrifice and the bestowal of gifts.'

61. *Ib.* i.3.36. 62. *Ib.* i.3.38.

For sheer barbarity, even the raw defence of slavery in ancient Greece and Rome can hardly vie with the authorities quoted by Samkara. It is therefore surprising that some of the modern admirers of Samkara are fond of writing on the humanism in his philosophy, when the philosopher himself quotes with enthusiasm all these inhuman legal measures against those whom he knows as the toiling millions of the country.

The other thing which some of his modern admirers are sometimes fond of doing is to compare him to Plato. There is surely much in this comparison, because both philosophers want to undermine the reality of nature and thereby cause heavy ideological impediment for the progress of science. But the comparison does not end there. There is also much in common in the sociology of the two. Samkara knows the toiling masses of his country as *sudra*-s, Plato as slaves. And an intense contempt for them characterises the general attitude of both. "In the developed theory of slavery, the slave was not regarded as a rational being. The master alone was capable of reason, the slave might hold 'correct opinion' if he strictly followed the directions of his master. This master-and-slave relation became fundamental for Plato's thought in every sphere."[63]

We have thus before us two clear examples of how the theoretical contempt for the material world is related to the social contempt for the toiling class. It is no wonder, therefore, that historically speaking such a philosophical outlook awaits its final doom from the class-conscious working class of the modern world. Already in his earlier writings, Marx, referring to the *emancipation of man*, observes: "The *head* of this emancipation is *philosophy*, its *heart* is the *proletariat*. Philosophy cannot be made a reality wihout the abolition of the proletariat, the proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being made a reality."[64]

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63. Farrington GS i.142.
64. Marx OR 58.

13. SUDRA AND SUFFERING

But let us return to Samkara. Af if not satisfied with the condemnation of the *sudra* as a moving cemetery, he proceeds to show that suffering constitutes the very connotation of the word *sudra*. The *sudra* means suffering; one who suffers therefore is figuratively called a *sudra*. The context in which he argues this is an interesting story of *Chandogya Upanisad*,[65] which we may briefly narrate here:

There once lived a very prosperous person called Janasruti Pautrayana, who was a liberal donor and proud of being so. One night some birds flew past him, discussing among themselves rather disparagingly his fame as compared to that of a philosopher called 'Raikva, the man with the cart'. On hearing this Janasruti wanted his attendant to find out the philosopher. After some search, the attendant found the philosopher, who was then scratching his itch sitting underneath his cart. Janasruti went to him, offered him six hundred cows, a gold necklace and a chariot drawn by a she-mule and, in exchange, wanted to be initiated in the secret wisdom of the philosopher. But 'Raikva, the man with the cart', indignantly refused the request. Janasruti went to him again, and this time offered him a thousand cows, a gold necklace, a chariot drawn by a she-mule, the village in which the philosopher lived, and Janasruti's own daughter too for the same purpose. The lovely face of the young girl melted the heart of the philosopher and he agreed to initiate the donor into the secret wisdom. As the Upanisad puts it,

Then, lifting her face towards himself, he (Raikva) said, 'He has brought these (gifts) along! *Sudra,* merely with this face you would cause me to speak.'

Strange indeed is the picture of the Upanisadic sage, scratching itch underneath his cart and agreeing to impart knowledge only in exchange of a young girl! But that is not what bothers Samkara. What annoys him is a different point altogether. Janasruti is addressed as a *sudra*, and yet he receives the Upanisadic wisdom! How can this be at all possible? Does it mean that the internal evidence of

65. *Ch Up* iv.

the Upanisadic literature goes against Samkara's claim that the *sudra*-s are not entitled to wisdom? Nothing can be more outrageous for Samkara than such a suggestion. So he argues that *sudra* in this context does not mean an actual *sudra,* the word is used figuratively in the sense of one afflicted with sorrow, which, Samkara wants us to believe, is the etymological meaning of the word:[66]

The word *sudra* can moreover be made to agree with the context in which it occurs in the following manner. When Janasruti Pautrayana heard himself spoken of with disrespect by the flamingo, grief (*suc*) arose in his mind, and to that grief the *rsi* Raikva alludes with the word *sudra*, in order to show thereby his knowledge of what is remote. This explanation must be accepted, because a (real) born *sudra* is not qualified (for the wisdom). If it be asked, how the grief (*suc*) which had arisen in Janasruti's mind can be referred to by means of the word *sudra,* we reply: On account of the rushing on (*adravana*) of the grief. For we may etymologise the word *sudra* by dividing it into its parts, either as 'he rushed into grief' (*sucam abhidudrava*) or as 'grief rushed on him' or as 'he in grief rushed to Raikva'; while on the other hand it is impossible to accept the word in its ordinary conventional sense.

14. Defence of Faith : Advaita Vedanta

Samkara apparently knows that rational or logical considerations cannot be the strong point either of his metaphysics or of his sociology. And he never claims this. He claims, on the contrary, that the former draws its sanction from the scriptures, the latter from the law-codes. Therefore an absolute faith in the authoritativeness of the two is the minimum precondition for the acceptance of his view in its totality. In defence of this faith, he finds it obligatory to silence the pretension of reason to have any efficacy of its own. Thus the inner needs of his view lead Samkara to defend faith against reason. At the same time we can also see in this the real service he, *as a philosopher,*

66. Samkara on *Br Su* i.3.34.

renders to the law-givers. Let us try to be clear about this.

We have already seen his wholesale admiration for whatever is said by the law-giver. However gratifying this may be from the law-giver's point of view, this is not the kind of service he needs from the philosopher as philosopher, for the same or similar boosting can as well be given to him by any other spokesman of the vested interests. There is something more which the law-giver needs, and it can be expected of the philosopher and the philosopher alone. This is the general theoretical denunciation of reason itself. Conscious of importance of superstitions for the purpose of controlling the masses, the law-givers do their best to condemn reason. But it is a sheer political condemnation, without being supported by philosophical consideration, while the question of the intrinsic efficacy of reason is after all a philosophical one and has to be answered on a philosophical level. Besides, much to the annoyance of the law-givers, there are among the Indian philosophers many who defend rationalism. Their defence of reason has to be theoretically answered or rejected. Such a task is beyond the law-givers and can be best undertaken only by the philosophers. But who among the philosophers can oblige the law-givers with a theoretical defence of faith against reason? Obviously only those for whom such a defence also suits their philosophical purposes. We have already seen who such philosophers are. They are our idealists and our idealists alone. Driven by the basic need of their metaphysics, they are obliged to condemn reason and experience, and in effect rationalise the irrational approach to truth.

Nothing can serve the purpose of the law-givers better, who want to get reason condemned in favour of faith. Therefore the main point for them is not whether an idealist crudely extolls everything that the law-giver says. If an individual idealist like Samkara does it, it is well and good. But even if the other idealists do not do it, from the law-giver's point of view that does not so much matter,

provided they keep themselves busy defending faith against reason—a service that the law-givers can expect from the philosophers alone.

Much to the gratification of the law-givers, Samkara does his best in rendering also this service to the law-givers. He argues his best to prove that it is philosophically foolish to have any trust in reason as against faith in the scriptures:[67]

As the thoughts of man are altogether unfettered, reasoning which disregards the holy texts and rests on individual opinion only has no proper foundation. We see how arguments, which some clever men had excogitated with great pains, are shown by people still more ingenious to be fallacious, and how the arguments of the latter again are refuted in their turn by other men; so that on account of the diversity of men's opinions, it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as having a sure foundation. Nor can we get over this difficulty by accepting as well-founded the reasoning of some person of recognised mental eminence, may he now be Kapila or anybody else; since we observe that even men of the most undoubted mental eminence, such as Kapila, Kanada (i.e. the founder of Indian atomism) and other founders of philosophical schools have contradicted one another.

Thus reason as source of knowledge is supposed to be inherently unreliable, because philosophers relying on reason alone are known to differ among themselves. What one proves on the strength of reason, is disproved by another on the strength of reason again. So it is best to surrender reason in favour of the faith in the holy texts. One can as well argue that since one swordsman proves himself better than another, swordsmanship as a technique of fighting is by nature useless: one fights best only when one surrenders the sword, or fights unarmed.

But let us not try to assess here the intrinsic merit of Samkara's argument. It has to be noted instead that his main point is precisely the opposite of the one that lead Gotama and Vatsyayana to formulate the philosophical methodology so brilliantly. The clash of ideas which ac-

67. *Ib.* ii.1.11.

cording to them gives the very life to philosophical activity is, for Samkara, the decisive argument against philosophical activity in its real sense. Without doubt or *samsaya* there is no philosophy for them; for Samkara there is philosophy only when there is abject faith—the very opposite of *samsaya*.

These are the two basic attitudes expressed in Indian philosophy, and between the two there is all the difference between idealism and its antithesis.

It will be wrong to imagine that Samkara is naive enough to believe that with the above argument alone he fully succeeds in denouncing reason once for all. He knows, on the contrary, that there are all sorts of prima facie difficulties in sticking to this argument. As he himself puts these in the form of possible objections to his argument:[68]

You cannot after all maintain (said the objector) that no reasoning whatever is well-founded; for you yourself can found your assertion that reasoning has no foundation on reasoning only; your assumption being that because some arguments are seen to be devoid of foundation other arguments as belonging to the same class are likewise devoid of foundation. Moreover, if all reasoning were unfounded, the whole course of practical human life would have to come to an end. For we see that men act, with a view to obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain in the future time, on the assumption that the past, the present and the future are uniform... And that 'want of foundation', to which you object, really constitutes the beauty of reasoning, because it enables us to arrive at unobjectionable agruments by means of the previous refutation of objectionable arguments. (No fear that because the *purvapaksa* is ill-founded the *siddhanta* should be ill-founded too) for there is no valid reason to maintain that a man must be stupid because his elder brother was stupid.

This is indeed a remarkably lucid way of putting some of the basic arguments that are sure to be raised against the idealists' denunciation of reason. The theoretical challenge posed by all this is sought to be boldly faced by the really sophisticated Indian idealists like Nagarjuna,

68. *Ib.*

Sriharsa and their commentators. Samkara himself either finds it beyond his own competence to go into the technical details of all this or he thinks that it is unnecessary for his purpose to do so. In any case, he does not make any attempt to go deeper into the problem and simply sidetracks the entire issue with the claim that dry arguments alone, howsoever tricky they may be, have absolutely no prospect to lead to liberation. So he argues:[69]

The true nature of the cause of the world on which final emancipation depends cannot, on account of its excessive abstruseness, even be thought of without the help of the holy texts; for, as already remarked, it cannot become the object of perception, because it does not possess qualities such as the form and like, and as it is devoid of characteristic signs (i.e. the probans essential for the inference) it does not lend itself to inference and the other means of right knowledge... Now it is clear that in the case of perfect knowledge a mutual conflict of men's opinions is impossible. But that cognitions founded on reasoning do conflict is generally known; for we continually observe that what one logician endeavours to establish as perfect knowledge is demolished by another, who, in his turn, is treated alike by a third. How, therefore, can knowledge, which is founded on reasoning and whose object is not something permanently uniform, be perfect knowledge?... Nor can we collect at a given moment and on a given spot all the logicians of the past, present and future time, so as to settle (by their agreement) that their opinion regarding some uniform object is to be considered perfect knowledge. The Veda, on the other hand, which is eternal and the source of knowledge, may be allowed to have for its object firmly established things, and hence the perfection of that knowledge which is founded on the Veda cannot be denied by any of the logicians of the past, present or future. We have thus established the perfection of this our knowledge which reposes on the Upanisads, and as apart from it perfect knowledge is impossible, its disregard would lead to 'absence of final release' of the transmigrating souls. Our final position therefore is, that on the ground of scripture and of reasoning subordinate to scripture, the intelligent *brahman* is to be considered the cause and substance of the world.

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69. *Ib.*

Apart from the old refrain that logic is useless because the logicians are known to differ among themselves, the whole thing so elaborately put by Samkara is nothing but the demand for an implicit faith in the holy texts. It is of course no use reminding Samkara that there are creeds other than the one he shares, that each of these creeds has its own holy text and that such texts do not necessarily agree to justify the general assumption that what is revealed in the holy text contains the most indisputable and uniform knowledge on the basis of which alone liberation can be attained. For Samkara all this is completely irrelevant. There is for him only one holy text and that is the Veda. Moreover this can be interpreted only in one way, namely that of his own choice.

To us these assumptions may appear to be extraordinarily courageous. But not so for Samkara. Is it because he knows that the law-givers are there to tackle those that may question the assumptions?

15. Defence of Faith : Mahayana Buddhism

In the service rendered by Samkara to the law-givers, we have distinguished two aspects—extra-philosophical and philosophical proper. The former consists in his wholesale boosting of the law-givers and the main point of the latter is the denunciation of reason in defence of faith.

With this distinction in mind, we may now turn to the Mahayana idealists. And the main point about them is that if they lag behind Samkara in the matter of the extra-philosophical form of service rendered to the law-givers, they nevertheless compensate for this by making the philosophical form of the same service much more imposing.

There is indeed one important factor that prevents these Mahayana Buddhists from making any great fuss about the authority of the law-givers. For all that we know about the Buddhists, they do not evolve any alternative legal literature of their own. They have their Vinayas no

doubt. But these are concerned mainly with the norm of moral conduct—particularly of the monks but partly also of the lay devotees—and are far too inadequate to serve the general administrative purposes, which the *dharma-sastra* of Manu and others want to do. This absence of any Buddhist law-code is at least apparently peculiar, for considerable tracts of the country are for various periods indisputably under the rule of those that are Buddhists by creed. Being rulers, they have to carry the administrative work of the territories under their control and for this purpose the need for certain definite laws are evidently necessary.

But what can these laws be? The question is important, though in the absence of definite evidences, our answer at the present stage of historical research cannot but be conjectural. And the possible conjectures for us are two. First, these Buddhist rulers do not care for any codified law at all. For their administrative purposes, they rely simply on the customary laws of the country. Second, they do in fact rely also on some codified laws, and these are nothing but the venerable laws of the *dharma-sastra*-s. The first of these conjectures is for us too bold to be readily subscribed to, for notwithstanding the general importance of the customary laws in Indian history it is difficult to conceive the entire administrative machinery ever resting exlusively on these. The second conjecture looks more plausible, particularly in view of the further fact that the Buddhist rulers are never known to have introduced any basic change in the social and administrative setup within the territories under their domination.

However, even assuming that the Buddhist rulers de facto accept the *dharma-sastra*-s for their general administrative purposes, we have to assume further that they are under the peculiar sectarian obligation not to make a public commitment of this because they express a sectarian animosity against the Buddhists. Thus, for all practical purposes, the Buddhist rulers may conveniently ignore or overlook the anti-Buddhist sentiments of the *dharma-*

sastra-s, while accepting these for their administrative purposes.[70]

But whatever may be the case of the rulers, the preachers of the Mahayana can never proclaim the authority of Manu and others, whose anti-Buddhist utterances are too serious to be just overlooked by the workers in the ideological front. Perhaps this explains why it is not possible for the Mahayana Buddhists to serve the cause of the law-givers in the extra-philosophical or non-philosophical form of expressing a wholesale admiration of their authority. But this does not mean that as idealist philosophers they are really indifferent to the basic class interest represented by the law-givers. Thriving as they do on the patronage of the parasitical class and in fact themselves living a parasitical life in their all-found monasteries, these philosophers render in their own way service to the basic interest represented by the law-givers, who are the foremost exponents of the norm of society split into the parasitical and the toiling classes. In other words, prevented by their own sectarianism to praise the law-givers directly, they are left with the alternative of serving their cause mainly on philosophical level. At this level, however, they work much more effectively than Samkara. We have the scope here to mention only a few salient features of this service.

First, as we have already seen, what is needed for the maintenance of a society split into a privileged minority and a toiling majority denied of privileges is crass faith. And what is needed for the defence of faith is the damnation of reason. This the Mahayana philosophers do, and they do it with greater competence than Samkara. While Samkara's main argument is that reason is useless because the rationalists are known to differ among themselves, the Mahayana Buddhists, beginning from the time of Nagarjuna, go on evolving extremely crafty considerations in

70. Dr N. N. Bhattacharyya tells me that the evidences of Pala inscriptions support such a possibility.

condemnation of normal reason and experience. It is often said that these philosophers are highly gifted logicians. This is true, for some of them are amazingly skilled in the technique of argumentation. But this does not mean that these philosophers have any genuine commitment to logic. At least up to the time of Dignaga and Dharmakirti, the main use of logic by the Mahayana Buddhists is to silence the pretentious claims of logic itself. Dignaga and Dharmakirti want to deviate from this path no doubt. But we have already seen the difficulties they face in trying to be really serious about logic consistently with their commitment to idealism. It is not necessary to raise this discussion over again. But we may quote Stcherbatsky,[71] who brilliantly sums up the attitude to logic of the Mahayana philosophers: "Buddhists must *quand meme*, in spite of logic, assert efficacy of their system of morality, in order to save religion. Logic must be condemned, not religion. The condemnation of logic is conditional in the Yogacara system, absolute with the Madhyamikas."

This condemnation of logic by the Mahayanists is clearly inspired by their anxiety to preserve faith, which is above all faith in their own scriptures. What is the essential feature of this faith, and how do the Mahayanists want us to understand it? The answer is to be sought in their own definition of *sastra* or scripture. This definition in the Mahayana literature is:

That which controls our foes, the passions,
What from rebirth and misery delivers
Is our Revelation, since it rules and saves.
No other creed possesses it,
This double benefit (of Mahayana).

Thus *sastra* is understood as *sas+tra*, the former meaning 'that which rules' and the latter 'that which saves'. What it is that the *sastra* rules over? Our passions or our lawless desires. And from what does it save us? The miserable prospect of rebirth which, as we shall presently see, pri-

71. Stcherbatsky (tr) *MV* 19n.

marily means suffering in hell. According to the Mahayanists this double benefit is there only in their own scriptures. These alone are supposed to be *sastra* in the real sense of the term.

Before passing on to see the social implications of this, let us have an idea of the importance of this concept of the *sastra* among the Mahayana philosophers.

The verse we have just quoted occurs in a work by Vasubandhu, *Vyakhya-yukti.*[72] Candrakirti quotes it to prove why Nagarjuna's work *Madhyamaka-karika*, containing as it does the quintessence of the Mahayana scripture *Prajna-paramita,* is supposed to be *sastra* in this Mahayana sense.[73] Also Sthiramati, commenting on the work *Madhyanta-vibhanga* attributed to Maitreyanatha, quotes it to prove that this work too is *sastra.* In this context Sthiramati[74] wants to be more explicit:

Further, why is Revelation called *sastra?* It is so called, because it conforms with what this word *sastra* means. It means ("that what rules—*sas,* and what saves—*tra*"), what by repeated instruction in religion rules out all passions together with all their germs and saves from a miserable rebirth in hell—a rebirth which is frightful by long, uninterrupted, manifold and intense suffering. Therefore, by ruling out our enemies—our passions—and from saving from rebirth in hell, it conforms to the definition of a work of Revelation. These two features are characteristics of all Mahayana and all works devoted to its elucidation. They are to be found nowhere else. Therefore, this work is a work of Revelation.

Candrakirti is a famous exponent of Sunya-vada and Sthiramati of Vijnana-vada. While Candrakirti quotes this definition of *sastra* to prove that *one of the basic philosophical works on Sunya-vada* is a *sastra,* Sthiramati quotes the same to prove that *one of the basic philosophical works on Vijnana-vada* is a *sastra.* Therefore, in spite of the difference between these two forms of Mahayana

72. *Ib.* 20.
73. Stcherbatsky CBN 122.
74. Stcherbatsky (tr) *MV* 19-20.

idealism, the two are united in denouncing reason in favour of the faith in *sastra,* and the very concept of *sastra,* as both want us to understand, implies on the one hand an instrument to rule over the passions, and on the other that which alone helps to evade the threat of hell.

And this is precisely what the law-givers want from the philosophers. Incidentally, ruling over the passions of the masses or controlling them is a formidable task, for, as the Greek statesman Polybius so admirably expresses the law-giver's viewpoint: "the masses in every state are unstable, full of lawless desires, of irrational anger, and violent passion". Their passions, therefore, are to be kept under control. According to the Mahayana philosophers, this is best done with their *sastra.* Besides their *sastra* helds for the masses the suppressed threat of hell; disbelief in the *sastra*-s means condemnation to hell.

But this is not the only thing the Mahayana philosophers do to serve the interest of the law-givers. They manage moreover to evolve a colossal mass of crass superstitions, freely enriching them with everything known in the country, to cow down the masses with awe, reverence and sheer terror. In this they can as well provoke the envy of the ancient Egyptians, whose venerable superstitions for policing the state are so admiringly looked at by the sophisticated Greeks like Isocrates and Plato.

16. Summing Up : Lenin on the Objective Class Role of Philosophical Idealism

We can perhaps best sum up the discussion so far with the following words of Lenin, with which he concludes his philosophical masterpiece *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*:[75] "... behind the epistemological scholasticism of empirio-criticism one must not fail to see the struggle of parties in philosophy, a struggle which in the last analysis reflects the tendencies and ideology of the antagonistic

75. Lenin MEC 347. Ital. added.

classes in modern society. Recent philosophy is as partisan as was philosophy two thousand years ago. The contending parties are essentially ... materialism and idealism. *The latter is merely a subtle, refined form of fideism,* which stands fully armed, commands vast organisations and steadily continues to exercise influence on the masses, turning the slightest vacillation in philosophical thought to its own advantage."

Idealism, in its latest and highly disguised form in which Lenin knows it, is empirio-criticism. Notwithstanding all that is supposed to be so new about it, as idealism, it plays the same 'objective class role' as is played by idealism throughout history. And that is 'rendering faithful service to the fideists'.[76]

What does Lenin mean by all this?

Fideism is the cult of faith. Fideists are those that deny knowledge in order to make room for faith. This, as Lenin says, is the main tendency and the social function of philosophical idealism.

But what has faith to do with society? From Lenin's point of view, the answer is quite clear. Among the instruments needed to maintain a society based on class antagonism and class exploitation, faith is always a highly effective one. The exterior of this faith may change from time to time and from place to place. But whatever form it may assume in different places and in different periods of history, one thing about it remains the same. It is the assumption that things are as they are because of factors other than the palpably worldly ones. Instead of being real features of the real material world—the world in which men actually live and which is normally known and brought under progressive human control—such factors are supposed to be beyond human knowledge and hence also beyond the scope of possible human interference. The importance of such an assumption for the maintenance of class society is obvious. The slave remains best

76. *Ib.*

reconciled to slavery and the serf to serfdom in so far as they are made to submit to it. The submission to such an assumption makes it impossible—and even impious—to change the existing state of affairs, inclusive, of course, of social iniquity and social injustice. Social iniquity is therefore simply to be overlooked and not opposed. That is the way of trying to make people accept it or take it for granted. In various ways philosophical idealism renders faithful service to such faith. And in this Lenin wants us to see its objective class role.

17. The Materialist Protest

From what we have already discussed about the law-giver Manu and the philosopher Samkara, it is obvious that their intention, if fully implemented, would have meant an absolute stifling of free thinking, a complete black-out of science and an eternal damnation of the toiling millions of the country—in short, the end of all progress. For the sake of progress, therefore, some people are needed in the country to flout outright the mandates of the law-givers and their theoretical apologists, the idealist philosophers. It is necessary above all to crack the myth they want to protect so elaborately—the myth of the scripture or *sastra* which, in the case of Manu and Samkara, means the Veda.

Who, in Indian philosophy, actually dare to do this, as bluntly as Samkara shows his servile admiration for the law-giver? There is only one answer to this question. They are our plain-speaking materialists, the Lokayatas or Carvakas.

Our knowledge of these materialists is incomplete no doubt. Their writings are presumably destroyed, their personality tenaciously depicted as devilish and monstrous, their philosophical position distorted beyond recognition and their mode of arguments depicted as mere bluff. The very name Lokayata or Carvaka becomes in Indian philosophy a mark of monstrosity, vulgarity, impiety and evil. Still, since some of the pious idealists also find it neces-

sary to illustrate how very impious and detestable these materialists are, some of the old and authentic popular verses of these materialists—which are called *pramanika-lokagatha*—are quoted in the writings of the idealists themselves. We give below, in rough and free translation, the most famous bunch of such verses.[77]

Heaven and liberation are mere empty talks. There is no soul that is imagined to go to the other world. The actions prescribed for the caste-society (*varnasrama*) do not really yield their alleged results.

The Agnihotra sacrifice, the three Vedas, the holding of the three staves and (the practice of the religious professionals of) smearing the body with ashes—all these are nothing but the sources of livelihood for persons that are neither intelligent nor manly.

If, (as claimed by the priests) the animal killed in the Jyotistoma sacrifice attains heaven straightway, why does not the sacrificer kill his own father (and thus ensure heaven for him)?

If the performance of the *sraddha* (the rite performed for the dead—a main source of the priest's income—in which food is offered to the dead) causes satisfaction to those that are already dead, oil put into the lamp even after it is blown off should make its flame ablaze.

Besides, the same assumption (namely that food offered in *sraddha* actually feeds the departed) should make it superfluous for the traveller to carry provisions with himself, because he should as well be satisfied while travelling afar by the food offered to him at home in the form of *sraddha*.

If, what is offered in *sraddha* can satisfy beings supposed to be in heaven, why not offer food down below for one actually on top of a tower?

As long as you live, live happily. Feed yourself with butter, even though on loan. Once the body is reduced to ashes, how can it ever return again?

If after quitting the body one goes to the other world, how is it that one does not return again drawn by the love for friends and others?

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77. Madhava *SDS* ch.1.

Hence, it is only as a source of livelihood that the Brahmins here have introduced the rites for the dead. There is nothing more in all this.

The authors of the three Vedas are just cheats and cunning thieves. All the learned formulas—the meaningless spells *jarvari-turvari*—like the wife taking the horse's phallus (i.e. a part of the Asvamedha sacrifice), are nothing but the inventions of cheats for the purpose of obtaining their sacrificial fees.

These are some of the verses surviving in the general wreck of ancient Lokayata materialism. We shall see some more of the fragments later. Though it is impossible to retain in translation the biting satire of the verses quoted, it is quite obvious that what inspires them is no fascination for theoretical abstractions. It is, on the contrary, the class-interest of the toiling millions. If, in the interest of the privileged minority, the law-givers and their ideological apologists—the idealists—find it necessary to entrench the myths of the *sastra*-s, after-life, gods and sacrifices, the Lokayata materialists, by making all these myths the main target of their attack, are also working for an objective class-role, and this is the very opposite of the idealist philosophers.

PART III

Antithesis of Idealism

Chapter 6

ANTITHESIS OF IDEALISM : DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1. Preliminary Remarks

In view of the general tendency of the modern scholars to inflate the importance of idealism in Indian philosophy, it is necessary first to determine its exact place in our philosophical heritage. We have seen, outside a section of the Upanisadic thinkers, the Mahayana Buddhists and the Advaita Vedantists, none in Indian philosophy—none at least with any real eminence—actually subscribes to idealism. Not that the power or popularity of the idealists is to be questioned. But these are largely derived from the political patronage and financial support received by them, because of the social function of their philosophy. However, since idealism is restricted only to those philosophers, the broad fact remains that the overwhelming majority of Indian philosophers are not idealists. This by itself is a merely quantitative consideration. But it acquires a qualitative significance when understood in the general context of the methodology of traditional Indian philosophy. Those who disapprove of idealism cannot be just indifferent to it. They have actively to oppose idealism, try to annihilate it theoretically. In Indian terminology, those who are not idealists look at idealism as their *purvapaksa* or antithesis,

which is to be negated in order to arrive at their *siddhanta*. This being true of the majority of Indian philosophers, the antithesis of Indian idealism acquires a good deal of theoretical enrichment.

2. Some Prominent Opponents of Idealism

The views or *siddhanta*-s of the opponents of idealism are, of course, often at variance with each other. We shall presently take up the question of the hard core of positive philosophical significance of this antithesis of Indian idealism. Before that let us try to have a rough idea of the large number of Indian philosophers who want to dissociate themselves—and therefore actively reject—the idealist outlook. Here is a list of only some of them.

The ancient Indian materialists. We have glimpses of them in the Upanisads as well as in the early Buddhist sources. In these works they are only occasionally mentioned by proper names. More frequently they are referred to as the upholders of the most impious views. These thinkers—or at least the most prominent section of their successors—come later to be known as the Carvakas or Lokayatas.

Kapila, to whom is attributed the Samkhya philosophy or the philosophy according to which unconscious primeval matter is the first cause of the world. Though we do not know his real date, Indian philosophical tradition knows him as the first philosopher or *adi-vidvan* and his fame is not unknown even to the authors or compilers of the Upanisads. The Buddha himself is supposed to have his early education under two followers of Kapila. The view attributed to him is a very ancient one.

Jaimini, to whom is attributed the source-book of the Mimamsa philosophy, *Mimamsa-sutra*. As a philosophy, it has apparently the peculiar purpose of theoretically defending the fundamental assumptions underlying the performance of the magical rituals of the Vedas—the *yajna*. We have nowhere else in the world such an elaborate phi-

losophy of direct ritual origin. Nothing is known for certain about the actual date of Jaimini or about his personal life. It appears that *Mimamsa-sutra* is the earliest of the peculiar type of philosophical works comprising of a large number of cryptic aphorisms, which are only mnemonic sentences or mere scraps of sentences. Jaimini's work is earlier than the Christian era—though, how early, we do not know.

Uluka or Kanada, also sarcastically called Kana-bhaksa or 'the atom eater'. To him is attributed the source-book of the Vaisesika philosophy, the most prominent feature of which is atomism. Kanada's work, *Vaisesika-sutra,* belongs perhaps to the early Christian era.

Gotama or Aksapada, also sarcastically called Caranaksa or 'one with eyes on feet'. To him is attributed the earliest systematic work on Indian logic and epistemology, *Nyaya-sutra,* which incorporates within itself atomism and the general ontological position of the Vaisesika philosophy. Since Gotama's work, in the form in which it has come down to us, contains polemics against the Mahayana idealists, we are to place it some time after the rise of the Mahayana, perhaps in the second century AD.

Srilabha and his brother philosophers known as the Sautrantika Buddhists. Srilabha himself is a little earlier than Nagarjuna. The Sautrantika is an early form of the Buddhist philosophy which, because of its antipathy to idealism, becomes a very important target of attack for the Mahayana idealists.

Katyayamiputra who is earlier than the first century AD and whose work forms the foundation of another older branch of Buddhism, known as the Vaibhasika. A commentary—called *Vibhasa*—is said to be composed on his work, from which the Vaibhasikas get their name. This commentary belongs to the first century AD.

Also belongs to the first century AD, the great Umasvati, who is the first to evolve a systematic exposition of the philosophical aspect of the Jaina religion—a religion that

is older than the rise of Buddhism and hence full of very archaic and quaint ideas.

Isvarakrsna, the author of the earliest extant work on the Samkhya philosophy, though, peculiarly enough, the philosophy as presented by him, is already tainted with alien ideas. Some of the modern scholars propose to place him in the fifth century AD.

Also belonging roughly to the same period are a number of very famous philosophers, all strongly against idealism. They are: Sabara, the commentator of Jaimini; Vatsyayana, the commentator of Gotama; Prasastapada, the exponent of the atomism of Uluka or Kanada.

To the next period—that of the maturest phase of Indian philosophical activity—belongs a number of the outstanding opponents of idealism. We have the scope here to mention only a few of them:

Subhagupta of *circa* 7th-8th centuries AD. He represents the standpoint of the Vaibhasika Buddhists and his main work has the only purpose of refuting idealism, particularly Vijnana-vada.

Akalanka of the 8th century AD. A Jaina by religious conviction, he is a logician of very great ability. An important theme of his philosophical writings is the detailed refutation of Vijnana-vada as presented by Dharmakirti and the defence of atomism against the polemics of the idealists.

Prabhakara and Kumarila of *circa* 8th century AD, both representing the Mimamsa philosophy. Of them, Kumarila is often mentioned as one of the greatest philosophers of India, which he undoubtedly is. We shall later see how elaborately he wants to refute idealism in all its important Indian forms.

Uddyotakara of *circa* 6th-7th centuries AD, Jayanta Bhatta of *circa* 8th-9th centuries AD, Vacaspati Misra of the 9th century AD, Udayana of the 10th century AD—all defending Indian atomism and logic or the standpoint of the Nyaya and Vaisesika philosophies in their eventual amalgamation.

Our list of the Indian opponents of idealism ends with the last great representatives of traditional Indian philosophy—the exponents of Navya-nyaya—beginning with Gangesa of Mithila, who belongs to the 13th century AD, and ending with Gadadhara of Bengal, of the 17th century AD.

It is not difficult to mention more names. But that is not necessary. What is necessary instead is to note that throughout the history of traditional Indian philosophy—from the Upanisads to Navya-nyaya—idealism is persistently challenged, though from various standpoints and in different ways.

3. An Amorphous Mass of Heterogeneous Disapprovals?

But, it will be objected, the list just given is extraordinarily strange. It is a list of assorted philosophers widely differing among themselves, though for reasons peculiar to each, all of them show a more or less intense distaste for idealism. Their common apathy to idealism need not be doubted. But this is something merely negative, and hence by itself far too inadequate to forge any positive unity among these philosophers. Thus the very concept of the antithesis of idealism—in so far as it is supposed to be based on the common pool of all these philosophers—is at best a precarious one. The antithesis of idealism in Indian philosophy is thus at best a descriptive epithet for an amorphous mass of heterogeneous disapprovals of the idealist outlook. It is futile to expect of it a coherent alternative to idealism.

What is true in this objection is important and it will be a serious error not to note it. At the same time it will be another error to overlook the fact that, notwithstanding the truth in the objection, there is also something about the Indian philosophical situation that makes the antithesis of idealism a positive concept.

But how, it will be asked, are we to arrive at this concept? Are we to question the basic fact that idealism is

contested in Indian philosophy not from the standpoint of any coherent alternative to it but from a number of mutually incompatible standpoints? Or, are we to trim these assorted alternatives to idealism according to our convenience so that we can somehow or other preserve our concept of this antithesis by some kind of a mechanical juxtaposition of what is thus left of these?

We propose nothing of the sort. What we propose instead is only a critical discrimination. It is not merely the discrimination between one aspect and another of the same philosophy opposing idealism. It is mainly the discrimination between one type of philosophy and another that oppose idealism. Our point, in other words, is that these assorted philosophies are best understood not in their assortment, which is really bewildering, but as classified into two groups or two types.

What are these types?

First, the group of those views that positively go to the making of the hard philosophical core of the antithesis of idealism. Secondly, the group of those views which, without belonging to this hard core and often violating its positive spirit, remain nevertheless on its periphery, negatively strengthening it with the exposure of the technical fallacies on the strength of which the idealists want to prove their own case. Though primarily negative, the contributions of these philosophies to the theoretical exposure of idealism are often very important. At the same time, the spirit of some of these philosophies—taken in their totality—is too repulsive to the genuine spirit of the full rejection of idealism. Hence, though surely belonging to the camp of the opposition to idealism, these views are actually outside its hard core. Accordingly we propose to place these at the fringe or the periphery of the antithesis of idealism.

But, it will be asked again, how are we to make this discrimination? Evidently we need a criterion for the purpose. But this criterion need not be arbitrary or a priori. It clear-

ly suggests itself when we proceed to consider a few actual cases of the opposition to Indian idealism.

4. In Quest of a Criterion

In the list of the opponents of idealism are placed—among others—Subhagupta, Kumarila and the plain-speaking materialists or Lokayatas. Let us first explain why we feel obliged to do this.

Subhagupta's *Bahyartha-siddhi* is dominated by one purpose—the refutation of idealism. As is evident from the title itself, it is intended to prove the reality of the external or extra-mental objects or, according to the Indian way of putting it, that our ideas have for their support the things of the external world. Subhagupta wants his book to be a reasoned rejection of Vijnana-vada. Since an important way in which the Vijnana-vadins want to prove their case is the refutation of atomism, Subhagupta's refutation of idealism is also inclusive of a defence of atomism. This means that the external world, the reality of which he is so keen on defending, is conceived by him as being essentially material, because the atoms are obviously so.

We may now ask a simple question. Are we supposed to place such a philosopher in the list of those who represent the antithesis of idealism? There can be only one answer, and that is in the affirmative. As a matter of fact, the later Indian idealists themselves want us to do this. Santaraksita and Kamalasila clearly realise that Subhagupta is too important an adversary to be passed unnoticed. They make special effort to refute some of the arguments with which Subhagupta wants to refute idealism.

If what we have just said about *Bahyartha-siddhi* is all that Subhagupta as a philosopher stands for, the simple question we have asked and the simple answer we have arrived at it, would have been enough for us to understand his position. But the fact is that the proof of the reality of the material world is not all that this philosopher stands for. He actually defends many more ideas

and attitudes. We have thus to ask a different—and comparatively more complicated—question about him. How far does Subhagupta, as representing the totality of his ideas and attitudes, stand for the full rejection of idealism? When we do this, we can see that there are important considerations preventing us to take his view as belonging to the hard core of the antithesis of idealism.

To begin with, Subhagupta is a Vaibhasika Buddhist. This means that he is not a secular philosopher but a religion-oriented one. His own religion-orientation is different no doubt from that of the self-styled Mahayanists and it certainly has much less of superstitious dross. But, in the same text disproving idealism, Subhagupta wants also to prove the omniscience of the Buddha, taking care only to emphasise that this omniscience is in perfect agreement with the view of reality of the material world. As against the Vijnana-vadin, according to whom the mind alone is real and the distinction between the knower and the known is after all unreal (*grahya-grahaka-kalpana*), Subhagupta argues: "The Buddha is omniscient, because he knows the endless objects of knowledge 'through the agency of his knowledge which is essentially receptive' (*jnanena-grahakena*) and not because his knowledge is non-dual in form (i.e. without the distinction between the subject and the object)."[1] This is the typical Vaibhasika view of the Buddha's omniscience—a view considered so important by Subhagupta that he writes a special treatise, the *Sarvajna-siddhi*,[2] to prove it more elaborately.

Again, his view proving the reality of the material world, as he argues towards the end of *Bahyartha-siddhi*, is supposed to draw its ultimate sanction from the Buddhist scriptures which, according to him, the Vijnana-vadins misunderstand and misinterpret. This means that his religion-orientation does not allow him to develop into a defender of rationalism in the full sense, howsoever sharp

1. Subhagupta *BS* 146-7.
2. The text survives in Tibetan translation: *Tanjur* mdo exii.7.

may be his polemics against idealism. Like his idealist opponents he remains—to a certain extent at least—a defender of faith in the scriptures. From this point of view, his philosophical conviction cannot but have the same social function as that of idealism, though it should be noted that idealism itself—with its elaborate denunciation of reason in defence of faith—serves this social function in a much more direct manner and on a more grotesque scale.

Lastly, because Subhagupta is after all a religion-oriented philosopher, philosophical knowledge cannot but be conceived by him as a means of attaining salvation or *nirvana*. It is true that *nirvana* itself is conceived in Vaibhasika Buddhism in a way different from that of the idealists, so much so that Stcherbatsky goes to the extent of arguing that from this point of view "the Vaibhasika outlook resembles the materialism of modern science".[3] In this, however, the great scholar makes an overstatement, not because there is no materialist proclivity in the Vaibhasika philosophy but because the conception of freedom characteristic of the materialism of modern science is quite different from the Vaibhasika conception of *nirvana*. For the materialism of modern science, freedom means the progressive mastery over nature resulting from the ever-deepening insight into it and its laws. For the Vaibhasikas, on the contrary, freedom means an imaginary escape from nature, which men are supposed to achieve by inducing in themselves some kind of subjective change. In the Vaibhasika terminology, it is the removal of the force of defilement or *asrava*. We need not go here deeper into this

3. Stcherbatsky CBN 47. He gives an interesting note: 'As a curiosity it may be added that when the educational authorities of the newly founded republic of Buriats in Transbaikalia started an anti-religious propaganda, they first of all assailed the doctrine of transmigration in its popular form and insisted on the fact that modern science favours a materialistic view of the universe. The Buddhist monks, who are Mahayanists, retorted in a pamphlet in which they developed the view that materialism is not unknown to them, since the Vaibhasikas maintained that after *nirvana* every life ceases for ever.'

conception of freedom, which it is impossible to do without digressing into the technicalities of the complicated metaphysics of the Vaibhasikas.[4] But it is important to note that the defence of the reality of the material world on the part of these philosophers is not inspired by the ideal of extending any greater mastery over it; it is inspired instead by the ideal of somehow or other escaping nature, which is possible only in imagination. Their emancipation from idealism does not mean any actual step towards science; their basic religion-orientation keeps them bound to what is really opposed to science.

To sum up the philosophical position of Subhagupta: Because his refutation of idealism does not show the real spirit of secularism, rationalism and science, we cannot look at his philosophy as the total rejection of idealism along with all its ramifications. His philosophy cannot thus belong to the hard core of the antithesis of idealism. At the same time, from the standpoint of this antithesis itself, his technical exposure of the fallacious grounds on which idealism is based—his defence of the reality of the material world inclusive of the defence of atomism—are too important to be just overlooked. We are thus also obliged to accept him as representing the antithesis of idealism in a real sense. Therefore failing on the one hand to place his philosophy in the hard core of this antithesis, and failing on the other to ignore its contributions to this antithesis, the alternative we are left with is to place it on the fringe of the antithesis of idealism.

In view of what we have just discussed about Subhagupta, the criterion for determining the hard core of the antithesis of idealism is not difficult to see. It is not the mere rejection of idealism, but the rejection of idealism as further characterised by secularism, rationalism and science. Without this characterisation, the rejection of idealism amounts only to a partial emancipation from it, and may even run the danger of passing into its opposite—

4. Chattopadhyaya IP 144f.

as it does more glaringly in the case of Kumarila. It is important to examine his position in some details.

5. Kumarila and the Purva-Mimamsa

As is the practice of many Indian philosophers, Subhagupta composes his *Bahyartha-siddhi* in the form of verses or *karika*-s. So does Kumarila write his philosophical magnum opus, *Sloka-vartika.* The total number of verses in *Bahyartha-siddhi* is one hundred and eightyeight only. Compared to this, Kumarila wants to go into much greater details of the refutation of idealism. Thus, apart from returning again and again to the refutation of the various collateral positions of the idealists in the different philosophical contexts, Kumarila finds it necessary to devote two special sections of his *Sloka-vartika* to the specific purpose of the refutation of the general position of the idealists. These two sections are called *niralambana-vada* and *sunya-vada*. The former contains two hundred and two verses, the latter two hundred and sixtythree. Thus, four hundred and sixtyfive verses are written by him for the purpose of directly refuting idealism. This means that only that portion of *Sloka-vartika* which is devoted to the refutation of the general grounds of the idealists can, by Indian standard, be easily considered a major philosophical work by itself. In philosophical sophistication too Kumarila is certainly one of the most outstanding thinkers of India. We shall presently see how much of genuine philosophical significance his refutation of idealism retains even today. Therefore, technically at any rate, it is impossible not to view Kumarila as representing the antithesis of idealism.

But where exactly does he belong? To the hard core of this antithesis or just to its periphery? To avoid an arbitrary answer, we have to consider his refutation of idealism in the context of the totality of his views.

Kumarila is a representative of the Purva-mimamsa philosophy, often referred to simply as the Mimamsa. Strangely enough, it is also known by the name Yajna-

vidya, meaning 'knowledge of the Vedic ritual'. Such a name tells its own story. The ancient Vedic ritual or *yajna* is the be all and end all of this philosophy. Its purpose, in other words, is to rationalise and defend not only the fundamental assumptions of the performance of the Vedic rituals but also everything that is directly or indirectly connected with them—the ritual injunctions, the ritual acts, the spells and implements, the fee for the priests employed to perform the rituals, the results which these rituals are supposed to lead to, and so on. The vast Mimamsa literature seriously discussing all this would have hardly been considered philosophical at all but for the fact that the Mimamsakas find it necessary also to face and answer certain basic questions that are distinctly philosophical.

Why they feel obliged to discuss philosophy is not difficult to see. The rituals as rituals have nothing directly to do with philosophy. But the Mimamsakas, living as they do in the later atmosphere of general philosophical controversies, rightly feel that the performance of these ancient rituals presupposes certain theoretical assumptions and that some of the philosophical views then in circulation flatly go against these. Their own assumptions have therefore to be theoretically worked out and defended against the alternative possibilities for the purpose of providing the ancient rituals with the rationale required in the later times. It is this that leads them to enter the field of philosophy and, when they do it, they have to discuss philosophy in all seriousness.

One of the problems they find it necessary to discuss is that of the validity of the Vedas prescribing the rituals and they find it impossible to do it without examining the concept of validity as such. Another problem which they find equally necessary to discuss is that of the reality of the material world, in the course of which they are led to refute philosophical idealism. The Mimamsakas discuss many more philosophical questions no doubt. However we shall concentrate mainly on these two, because they give

us some idea of the internal contradiction of the Mimamsa as philosophy.

Why are the Mimamsakas so keen on discussing the question concerning the validity of the Veda? Without a theoretical defence of the absolute validity of the Veda, what they basically stand for simply collapses. The rituals they discuss are after all Vedic rituals, i.e. everything about them is supposed to draw its sanction from the Veda. Therefore the possibility of even the slightest doubt about the validity of the Veda is simply ruinous for the Mimamsakas. This leads them to argue that the Veda is absolutely valid. The way in which they do it is interesting. Not to speak of any human author of the Veda, it is impermissible from their standpoint to imagine even any divine author of the Veda, for the assumption of an author of the Veda in any sense makes the validity of the Veda ultimately dependent on the trustworthiness of such an author. For the Mimamsakas, this means the risk of viewing the validity of the Veda as some kind of borrowed validity or derived validity—validity dependent on some factor other than itself. The Mimamsakas thus argue that the Veda is absolutely valid, i.e. absolutely on its own strength or by its own right. This is the genesis of their famous view of 'intrinsic validity' or *svatah-pramanya,* the peculiarity of which we shall later discuss.

The appalling orthodoxy and conservatism of the Mimamsa philosophy is thus quite obvious. Peculiarly enough, the same philosophy takes a very radical stand particularly in defence of atheism and in refutation of philosophical idealism. To understand this radicalism as resulting from their orthodoxy, we have to digress here a little to see its actual meaning particularly because the same orthodoxy leads another section of Indian philosophers to defend idealism in its extreme form.

As far as the general claim of the absolute validity of the Veda, there is no difference between the Mimamsa and the Advaita Vedanta. And yet the Advaita Vedanta is as uncompromising a defence of philosophical idealism as the

Mimamsa stands for its rejection. How can this be possible? How in spite of the claim of being equally based on the scriptural authority of the same Veda, do the Mimamsa and the Advaita Vedanta arrive at such flatly contradictory philosophical positions? The reason is that by the Veda the two philosophies do not really mean the same thing. The traditional way of putting this is that the Mimamsa takes its stand on the *karma-kanda* or 'ritual branch' of the Veda, while the Advaita Vedanta is the outcome of its *jnana-kanda* or 'knowledge branch'.

This means that in spite of all the verbose veneration for the Veda expressed by both, none of these two Vedic philosophies par excellence actually bothers to work out a philosophical view based on a comprehensive understanding of the real contents of the Vedic literature. For all practical purposes the contents of *Rgveda*—assumed by the Vedic orthodoxy itself as forming the very basis of the whole of the Veda—are ignored by both. For the Mimamsakas, *Rgveda* is virtually nothing more than a bundle of ritual spells, important simply because of the sound these convey and not at all for what these really or literally mean. For the Advaita Vedantists also, *Rgveda* is virtually nonexisting beyond of course the veneration expressed for its name and beyond perhaps the few scraps of this vast literature which are quoted—out of their original context—in the Upanisads.

Thus ignoring the actual contents of *Rgveda,* just as the Advaita Vedantists concentrate almost exclusively on one trend of the speculations recorded in the Upanisads, the Mimamsakas take their stand on those portions of the Vedic literature that are directly concerned with the rituals, i.e. concretely on the *Brahmana*-literature in particular. It would have been comparatively easier for them to do this, if they were indifferent to philosophy. Since they are not so, the Upanisads—far from helping them in their philosophical enterprise—create for them a really formidable problem. They find it impossible to deny the established fact that the

Upanisads form part of the Veda, and since from their own standpoint the Veda is absolutely valid, they cannot just disown the authoritativeness of the Upanisads. They also find it impossible to accept the philosophical content of the Upanisads in conformity with the philosophical position that suits their purpose of the defence of the rituals: the dominant trend of the Upanisadic speculations is pronouncedly idealist while, as we shall presently see, the idealist outlook goes against the defence of the ritual acts and all their presuppositions. What then can the Mimamsakas do with the actual contents of the Upanisads? The only alternative they are left with is to explain these away. And the way in which they hope to perform this difficult task is most ingenious. There can be nothing in the Veda, they argue, that is not connected with ritual or injunctions for its performance. If, therefore, the prima facie meaning of any Vedic passage does not convey such an idea, the passage itself has to be understood in an indirect sense of some kind of a roundabout glorification of the ritual injunction.

Here is a typical example of this. A certain Vedic passage declares that Vayu (Wind) is a swift-moving deity. There is nothing in the plain meaning of this to convey any ritual injunction. So its plain meaning cannot be its real meaning. But what, according to the Mimamsakas, is its real meaning? They argue that taken in the sense of an indirect glorification of a ritual, the passage really means: Just as Wind is a swift-moving deity, so also the ritual performed with Wind as the deity, swiftly brings its desired result. Such an indirect glorification of the ritual as the underlying meaning of the Vedic passages that have apparently nothing to do with the ritual injunctions is, in the terminology of the Mimamsakas, an *arthavada*. And they want us to believe that the Upanisads are to be taken as *arthavada*. This generalised claim apparently soothes the philosophical conscience of the Mimamsakas and none of them really takes the trouble of showing how the whole of the Upanisads is in fact mere *arthavada*. This is how,

in defence of the rituals, the Mimamsakas want to explain away the philosophical contents of the Upanisads.

But what is it that motivates them to refute idealism which, among the Mimamsakas, Kumarila does with a great deal of technical competence? Kumarila himself leaves nothing vague about it. As he puts it, "According to the theory (of the idealists) all experiences are like experiences of a dream. And it is for the refutation of this theory that we seek to prove the reality of the external things. It cannot be for the mere pleasures of a dream that people engage themselves to the performance of *dharma* or the religious duty (which for the Mimamsakas simply means the performance of the Vedic ritual). Since dream comes to a man spontaneously during sleep, (on the idealist assumption) the wise man would, instead of performing the rituals, lie down quietly when desirous of obtaining the real results. Therefore, we must try our very best to establish by arguments the view that external objects are real."[5]

This gives us some idea of the real need felt by the Mimamsakas to refute idealism. The rituals are to be performed for attaining certain specific results, not necessarily other-worldly. One desirous of having a son is to perform the ritual called *putresti*, one desirous of obtaining a village is to perform the ritual called *samgrahani*, and so on. The generalised description of such results is *svarga:* though ordinarily meaning heaven, the word is used in the Mimamsa literature in the technical sense of pleasure or *sukha*. Thus the typical ritual injunction is: *svargakamah yaieta*, 'one desirous of pleasure is to perform the ritual'. From the strictly idealist point of view, however, this hardly makes any sense. If everything in the material world is unreal, what is the meaning of striving after the pleasure of obtaining a son or a village? All experience being for the idealists similar to dream-experience, the pleasure which one is supposed to have by performing the ritual is no better than the pleasant experi-

5. Kumarila *SV* niralambana-vada 11-13.

ence of dreaming. Assuming this, it is silly to go in for the performance of the ritual which, to say the least, is often an extremely strenuous and expensive proposition. In short, the idealist outlook is totally incompatible with the basic urge for the performance of the ritual. Hence is the need to refute idealism. Kumarila concludes[6] his refutation of idealism with the expression of relief that there no longer remains the major objection to the Mimamsa enquiry into *dharma.*

So what actually inspires Kumarila to refute idealism is the Indian priest-class interest par excellence!

Let us not forget however the other fact that technically speaking Kumarila is a very outstanding philosopher. He has the mastery of a superb skill of philosophical analysis and argumentation and he knows full well how to use it for silencing his philosophical opponents. Therefore, howsoever ridiculous and reactionary may be the real consideration that motivates him to refute idealism, when he actually proceeds to do this he shows a remarkable technical perfection from the philosophical point of view. Only if it were possible to look at his refutation of idealism without the general context of his total philosophical commitment, we could easily say that his elaborate discussion of the subject is a magnificent specimen of the Indian antithesis of philosophical idealism. But the fact is that we cannot do so. We have, on the contrary, to understand his polemics against idealism in the wider context of his general theoretical attitude—his appalling orthodoxy and conservatism, his dogged defence of ritualism and the priest-class interest and his endless pleading for the authoritativeness of the scriptures. This defence of the scriptures is—from the standpoint of Indian progress, both social and ideological—by far the most dreadful accessory to philosophical idealism. Incidentally, since this is what interests the Indian law-givers much more than the tech-

6. *Ib.* sunya-vada 263.

nical arguments either in defence or rejection of the idealist outlook, the Mimamsakas—as the greatest champions of Vedic orthodoxy—have always a place of very high honour in the official view of the Indian philosophy. The really radical implication of their technical rejection of idealism is somehow or other conveniently overlooked.

Such is the inner contradiction of Kumarila. What he has to contribute to the rejection of idealism is undoubtedly of great significance. At the same time, he rejects idealism not because he wants to defend science against superstition, rationalism against faith, secularism against religion-orientation, progress against stagnation. This simply means that in spite of all that he does for the philosophical emancipation from the idealist outlook, he is far from outgrowing the ideological offshoots of idealism itself—like orthodoxy. faith, superstition and myth. Does his polemic against idealism then belong to the hard core of the antithesis of idealism? Surely not. But does it not have anything to do with this antithesis? The answer is surely in the affirmative. Wherein then in this antithesis does his negation of idealism belong? Not to its hard core but to its periphery.

What is said of Subhagupta and Kumarila is broadly true of the Jaina philosopher Akalanka. Being an eminent logician, what he contributes to the emancipation from the idealist outlook retains a great deal of philosophical significance even today. At the same time, since this is only a part of the religion-oriented philosophy, his emancipation from idealism is at best incomplete. In other words, notwithstanding the intrinsic importance of Akalanka's rejection of idealism, his philosophy cannot belong to the hard core of the antithesis of idealism, and this basically for the same reason for which the philosophy of Subhagupta, the Vaibhasika Buddhist, and of Kumarila, the Mimamsaka. do not belong to it.

We may thus sum up the criterion for determining the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism. It is not the mere defence of the reality of the material world, but this

defence as further characterised by secularism, rationalism and science.

6. The Hard Core of the Antithesis of Idealism

Which are the philosophies that—according to the criterion we have just reached—actually belong to the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism?

One of these is well-known. It is the plain-speaking materialism, called the Lokayata. From the surviving scraps of what the Lokayatas actually argue, it is evident that—as outspoken materialists—they reject idealism along with all its accessories—religion-orientation, faith in the scriptures and superstitions in most of its major forms.

In the teeth of the opposition of the Indian law-givers, the Lokayatas bluntly declare that all talk of scriptural authority of the Veda—and hence all apology for faith in it—is just a hoax. They go even to the extent of proclaiming that this hoax is deliberately played to exploit the people in the interest of the social parasites, i.e. in the Lokayata terminology, those who are devoid of both intelligence and manliness (*buddhi-paurusa-hinah*). But the Lokayatas argue this not on the strength of a great deal of logical subtleties. What they rely on is some kind of elemental rationalism. If by slaughtering an animal in sacrifice you ensure heaven for it, why do you not similarly ensure heaven for your own father? This is the typical form of the Lokayata argument and, as an argument, it is amazingly simple.

The simplicity of their arguments gives us an idea of the grandeur as well as of the limitations of their position. The grandeur is not due to sophistication and scholasticism, for which the Lokayatas care least. It is due to their instinctive adherence to a sound epistemological position. As far as we can judge from their surviving 'authentic popular verses', their typical way of examining the validity of a proposition is to put it to the test of practice. The underlying assumption of the *sraddha* ritual is that food offered to a

person departed as far away as the other world can actually feed him. This, if true, should also mean that food offered to a traveller at home in a similar ritual should feed him on his way. Why then does he carry his own provisions? This is the Lokayata way of summarily rejecting the basic assumption of the *sraddha* ritual, without caring to enter into any metaphysical debate about it.

The main point on which the Lokayata arguments hinge is thus the hard commonsense of practical life. It is, in other words, precisely what our idealist philosophers are most apprehensive of. They can easily see that the verdict of practice goes flatly against their main claim of the unreality of the material world. In their own practical life they are obliged to belie their idealist outlook. As a way out of this contradiction between their theory and practice, they concoct the queer concept of a 'truth that is really false'—the so-called *samvrti-satya* or *vyavaharika-satya*. From the Lokayata standpoint, however, the *vyavaharika-satya* is the only *satya*: that alone is true which proves itself to be so in practical life. Any truth-claim outside the verdict of practice is only a fiction as is the proposition concerning the efficacy of the *sraddha* ritual.

This shows the real strength of the Lokayata position, for without resorting to practice as the criterion of truth there is no final emancipation from the idealist outlook. At the same time, it is necessary to note that the way in which the Lokayatas take this stand is also indicative of their weakness or limitation. Philosophically speaking, it means a formidable proposition to defend this stand itself. Many other positions are evolved in Indian philosophy with regard to the question of the criterion of truth and they are elaborately defended by very eminent philosophers. The defence of practice as the real criterion of truth is thus not an easy proposition. It can be satisfactorily done only by the critical rejection of other ideas and attitudes. Do the Lokayatas perform this task? For all that we know, they are farthest from it. We are left even to presume that they hardly know the need of formulating such a serious epistemological

position in epistemological terms proper. Their acceptance of practice as the criterion of truth is instinctive, as it were. Being so, it is vulnerable to the critical considerations of the opponents, who can pretend to ignore the Lokayata arguments as too naive to be seriously taken.

But this does not mean that in the history of Indian philosophy the claim that practice is the real criterion of truth is destined to remain at such a naive level of mere instinctive acceptance. On the contrary it is very seriously defended by another section of Indian philosophers. They are the Nyaya-Vaisesikas. We shall later see how magnificently they do this and how, in doing this, they literally tear to pieces all the apologies for idealism and irrationalism.

If these philosophers do nothing else than defend this position in epistemology, even then they can legitimately claim to represent the hard philosophical core of the antithesis of Indian idealism. However they do much more than this. They refute idealism no less competently than any other ever does in Indian philosophy, inclusive of thinkers like Subhagupta, Kumarila and Akalanka. As a matter of fact, there are reasons to think that at least some of the major considerations against philosophical idealism which we come across in the writings of its other eminent opponents are directly inspired by—if not borrowed from—those of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas.

This is perhaps only to be expected. The Lokayata apart —which, as far as we know, is not defended by any advanced philosopher belonging to the maturer phase of Indian philosophical activity—practically everything that the Nyaya-Vaisesika stands for needs the most complete rejection of idealism. The Nyaya-Vaisesika is nothing if not logic and atomism. In the Indian context, any concession to idealism is fatal for both. Among the advanced Indian philosophers, therefore, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas have to be most serious about the rejection of idealism. Their writings naturally become the largest philosophical fund for the antithesis of idealism.

In order to make their rejection of idealism philosophically thorough, they also feel the need of defending and developing a number of collateral positions in philosophy which, to say the least, are extremely important. One of these we have just noted—the view that practice is the real criterion of truth. Another is their theory of dream and illusion, on the evidence of which the idealists want to draw heavily. From the Nyaya-Vaisesika point of view, however, this evidence of dream and illusion, on which the idealists depend so much, is at best superficially understood by them. Rightly understood, this very evidence calls for a rejection of idealism, for dream and illusion make no sense without the admission of the reality of the material world.

No less remarkable of the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy is its defence of rationalism against irrationalism and obscurantism. The importance of this can hardly be exaggerated specially in the Indian context, where the basic struggle between idealism and its antithesis assumes the form of the struggle between irrationalism and rationalism. The Nyaya-Vaisesika defence of rationalism, because it is a basic feature of the philosophy, cannot but make it fully committed to the essentially secular standpoint, though, as we shall presently see, certain important clarifications are necessary on this point.

Further, the Nyaya-Vaisesika as a philosophy is inconceivable without its atomism. For reasons already discussed, this commitment to atomism—particularly in the maturer period of Indian philosophical activity—means also an active defence of atomism against the powerful polemics of the idealists. This the Nyaya-Vaisesikas do, and in the course of doing this, they make significant contribution to the general fund of Indian science.

Pending certain clarifications, therefore, we propose to accept the Nyaya-Vaisesika not only as a thoroughly anti-idealist philosophy but moreover one basically committed to rationalism, secularism and science. In short, it belongs to the hard core of the antithesis of philosophical idealism.

But is there any other philosophy belonging to this hard core? At least in the judgment of Samkara, there is surely another. It is the Samkhya philosophy attributed to Kapila. Samkara takes the greatest care to refute the Samkhya, because he feels that it represents the strongest threat to his idealism as well as his scripture-orientation. It threatens his idealism so much, because—as Samkara understands it—it is at least dangerously near-materialist, if not fully so. The main point of the Samkhya, as Samkara understands it, is that "unconscious primeval matter, independently of anything else (*svatantram*), is the world-cause".[7] The word *svatantram* is deliberately used, because elsewhere also Samkara explains that, in the Samkhya view, the universe evolves from the material first cause itself[8]:

Just as grass, herbs, water, etc. independently of any other instrumental cause (*nimittantara-nirapeksa*) transform themselves by their nature alone (*svabhavata eva*) into milk, so the Samkhyas assume that primeval matter also transforms itself into intelligence (*mahat* or *buddhi*) etc. And if asked, how do the Samkhyas know that the grass transforms itself independent of any instrumental cause, they reply: Because no such cause is observed. If some such cause were actually perceived, we could certainly apply it to grass etc. according to our liking, and thereby produce milk. But as a matter of fact we do no such thing. Hence the transformation of the grass and the like must be considered to be due to its own nature merely; and we may infer therefrom that the transformation of primeval matter is of the same kind.

No less repulsive than its materialism—to Samkara—is the anti-scriptural position of the Samkhya. As he puts it, "the system of Kapila contradicts the Veda as well as the words of Manu which follow the Veda."[9] Samkara extensively quotes from the Upanisads as well as the legal and mythological literature to prove this and he gives us the impression that at least on this point he is really objective.

To Samkara's understanding, therefore, the Samkhya is

7. Samkara on *Br. Su.* ii.1.1. 8. *Ib.* ii.2.5. 9. *Ib.* ii.1.2.

at least a dangerously near-materialist philosophy thoroughly alien to the spirit of the scriptures. We have quoted this understanding of the Samkhya, because much of it is admittedly lost and hence it may not be a methodological error to try to guess its original attitude to idealism and religion-orientation from the writings of the most renowned representatives of these.

We shall presently return to discuss the Samkhya in more details and we shall see that, notwithstanding its later distortions in various ways, there are grounds to think that the philosophy—in its original form—represents a thoroughly secular and rational attitude, besides being flatly opposed to idealism. According to our criterion, therefore, it also belongs to the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism.

To sum up the discussion so far: The antithesis of Indian idealism has a hard core and it is constituted by the Lokayata, Nyaya-Vaisesika and the Samkhya. Others among the eminent opponents of idealism—notably the Mimamsakas, Vaibhasikas, Sautrantikas and Jainas—belong to the fringe of this antithesis, though the technical importance of their exposure of philosophical idealism is not to be ignored.

A number of objections are sure to be raised against such an understanding of the Indian philosophical situation. In the present chapter we shall discuss mainly one of them. It is against the tendency to put in the same category philosophies like Nyaya-Vaisesika and Samkhya —ordinarily imagined as sharing the Vedic orthodoxy—with the most impious and heretical form of crass materialism of the Lokayatas.

But this objection is misleading. Before it comes into circulation, these three philosophies—the Lokayata, Nyaya-Vaisesika and Samkhya—are actually viewed in ancient India as belonging to the same category. An important evidence for this is to be found in *Arthasastra*, though the right understanding of the evidence presupposes a long digression into textual analysis.

7. Kautilya on the Indian Philosophical Situation

Arthasastra is traditionally attributed to Kautilya or Canakya, the brain behind the Maurya empire. Accepting this tradition, its date is roughly the fourth century BC.

With the discovery of this work, claims Jacobi,[10] "we have acquired a positive starting point for constructing the history of Indian philosophy." It is well-known of course that *Arthasastra* is neither a treatise on Indian philosophy nor a compendium of the Indian philosophical views, like those of Madhava or Haribhadra. How is it that Jacobi considers it so important for constructing the history of Indian philosophy? The answer is that though primarily a work on ancient political economy, it contains in a very clear form a systematic classification of the 'branches of knowledge' (*vidya*-s) of the age, indicating the place of philosophy in these. Let us follow Jacobi's masterly analysis of the data contained in it, so long as we are not obliged to break away from him on considerations purely textual.

The main points of Kautilya throwing light on the Indian philosophical situation are two.

First, he recognises four distinct branches of knowledge, and calls them *anviksiki, trayi, varta* and *dandaniti*. Jacobi renders them as philosophy, theology, science of agriculture and statecraft respectively. But these equivalents—particularly the first—are to be taken with some critical caution.

Anviksiki is the old Indian term for logic. But the very concept of logic underlying it is not without an interest. The grammarian Panini[11] suggests that it is called *anviksiki* because it has for its object *anviksa*, literally 'after-knowledge' (*anu+iksa*). The more frequently used later word for 'after-knowledge' is *anumana*, by which is meant

10. H. Jacobi in IA 1918.101ff.
11. *Panini* v.1.109.

inference. In the *Nyaya-sutra*,[12] Gotama explains why inference is called 'after-knowledge': inference presupposes perception, i.e. is possible only on the basis of some previous perceptual experience. For understanding Kautilya, therefore, the main point to be noted is that *anviksa* being equivalent to *anumana*, the word *anviksiki* means for him what later comes to be called *anumana-vidya*, i.e. the science of inferential knowledge, which, in its turn *presupposes direct perceptual evidence or, more simply, direct experience*. Jacobi's rendering of *anviksiki* as philosophy is thus to be taken with this reservation that Kautilya himself does not allow within his concept of philosophy any place for the alleged mystical, intuitive or scriptural approach to reality. For him, philosophy is essentially rational and the only data accepted by it for rational analysis are data furnished by direct experience.

By *trayi* Kautilya means theology, as Jacobi suggests. But it is theology of a special brand. The word literally means 'the three' and this is one of the most typical forms in which the Veda is referred to in ancient Indian literature. Thus *trayi* specifically means Vedic theology, and not theology in any other form. This is perhaps only to be expected. Admitting the traditional date of Kautilya, we have reasons to think that the Buddhist and Jaina theologies—i.e. traditional Indian theology in its two other major forms—do not yet acquire much importance in his time and Kautilya possibly ignores these. In any case the Vedic theology is the only theology recognised by him.

But the more important point about Kautilya is that from his standpoint *anviksiki* is to be clearly differentiated from *trayi*. If by *anviksiki* he means philosophy—which he surely does—it follows that the other mark of philosophy proper is secularism. Philosophy is not theology—not the knowledge of the scriptures or Veda. That is a different 'branch of knowledge' altogether.

12. Gotama *NS* i.1.5. The understanding seems to be taken from *Carakasamhita* i.11.21.

The result of such an understanding is that the Vedanta view, which is intended to be nothing but the systematisation of the 'knowledge-branch' of the Veda, cannot be, in Kautilya's assessment, a philosophy in the strict sense. So also is the Mimamsa, the rationalisation of the 'ritual-branch' of the Veda. Both are evidently considered as belonging to theology or *trayi*—not to be confused with philosophy proper. Significantly, as we shall presently see, while giving the list of the philosophical views accepted by him, Kautilya is completely silent about both Vedanta and Mimamsa. This silence must have been deliberate for, as Jacobi explains, "even if Vedanta existed at that time as a school, Kautilya could easily view both Mimamsa-s (i.e. both Purva-mimamsa and Vedanta, the latter also known as the Uttara-mimamsa) as belonging to Theology."

As for *varta* and *dandaniti*, there is little to modify Jacobi's rendering of these as science of agriculture and statecraft respectively.

Such are the branches of knowledge acknowledged by Kautilya. They are broadly to be divided under two heads —non-secular and secular. The former means the study of the scriptures or the Veda. Along with economics and politics, philosophy belongs to the latter. Indeed, philosophy —understood essentially as *anviksiki* or a rational analysis of experience—cannot but belong to the category of secular branches of knowledge.

It has to be noted that even in Kautilya's times there is formidable opposition to such a view of philosophy. His scheme of the fourfold branches of knowledge is not accepted by others. Kautilya himself mentions other views on the point, though only for the purpose of making his own position clear by way of differing from them.

Of such rival views then in circulation, the one that interests us most is attributed by Kautilya to the Manavas, literally 'the followers of Manu'. Eminent modern scholars have already discussed the question of the possible relation of these 'followers of Manu' with the law-codes later redacted as *Manu-smrti*, and we need not reopen the ques-

tion here. What interests us is that the attitude to philosophy as expressed in *Manu-smrti* and by the 'followers of Manu' in Kautilya's text fully concur. Thus, according to Kautilya,[13] the followers of Manu acknowledge only three branches of knowledge, namely *trayi, varta* and *dandaniti*. What they drop from the list is *anviksiki* or philosophy in Kautilya's sense. The followers of Manu refuse to admit it as an independent branch of knowledge. But why do they take such an attitude? Because, says Kautilya, in their understanding *anviksiki* is already included in *trayi*, and hence has no independence of its own. This means that philosophical activity, as far as it is approved of by the followers of Manu, is already included in the study of the Veda: rational analysis has to be strictly subservient to the scriptures. We have already seen how this view is worked out in *Manu-smrti* and allied legal literature and what damage it caused for the Indian philosophical situation. Evidently, the view itself is in circulation long before the redaction of *Manu-smrti* in its present form and, moreover, as early as the fourth century BC, it is associated with the name of Manu. Among the later philosophers, Samkara wants to rationalise it with great enthusiasm.

But Kautilya has no sympathy for this view. He dissociates himself clearly and categorically. For him, *trayi* and *anviksiki*—theology and philosophy—as branches of knowledge are completely different. This means that though he does not question the scriptures and the importance of the study thereof, the logical or rational approach to reality has for him an independent status. No, much more than this. Not only does he acknowledge the independent efficacy of reason, he even goes to the extent of boldly proclaiming the supreme importance of logic and logic-oriented philosophy among all the branches of knowledge. Hence is his famous verse: "*Anviksiki* is ever renowned as the lamp of all the branches of learning, the aid of all activities and the basis of all virtue."[14]

13. Kautilya *AS* i.2.2-3.

14. *Ib.* i.2.12.

Incidentally, this bold defence of rationalism on the part of a ruthless representative of the ruling class like Kautilya must not be misunderstood. Like the orthodox law-givers —the authors of the *dharmasastra*-s—Kautilya is fully aware of the social function of superstition, i.e. its importance for policing the state.[15] How then does he talk of *anviksiki*—of logic and rational philosophy—so enthusiastically? The answer is that he is not at all recommending it for the masses; he recommends it only for the rulers of the state. The section on the 'branches of knowledge' of *Arthasastra* we are now discussing is only a part of Kautilya's programme of 'the training of the prince for the arduous duty of rulership'. Kautilya explains in his own way that like economics and theology, rational philosophy is intended only to strengthen *danda* or 'the rod', i.e. the coercive power necessary for the security and prosperity of the state: *anviksiki-trayi-vartanam yogaksema-sadhano dandah.*[16] His attitude is thus quite outspoken. For the effective use of superstition which he freely recommends for maintaining political power, the upholders of this political power must themselves be free from the spell of superstitions, for those that are prone to superstitions are incapable of full exploitation of these for political purposes. The successful rulers must be able to use cool and calculated logic for their own purposes and are hence expected to have a thorough training in logic and in rationalist philosophy—in *anviksiki* as Kautilya calls it. Recommendation of the same rationalist training for the masses completely changes the picture. But Kautilya is class-conscious enough not to commit such a folly. His political philosophy fully endorses the *varnasrama* norm, according to which the toiling millions or *sudra*-s are to be denied all cultural privileges.

But let us return to the statements of Kautilya that are important for our immediate discussion. Of his two significant propositions, we have so far discussed only one—

15. *See supra* Ch.5, Sec. 4. 16. Kautilya *AS* i.4.3.

his concept of philosophy as something essentially rational and secular. His other proposition vitally important for our understanding of the Indian philosophical situation is that by *anviksiki* he understands three—and only three—philosophical views. These he calls Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata. There is no ambiguity whatsoever about Kautilya on this point. As Jacobi says, "According to Kautilya the essence of philosophy lies in systematic investigation and logical demonstration: in his judgment these conditions are satisfied only (*iti*) by Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata."

We have already seen the possible reasons for Kautilya's silence over Buddhism, Jainism, Vedanta and Mimamsa. Still there is something apparently strange about his enumeration of Indian philosophical views. The materialism of Lokayata is of course well-known, and so is its refusal to have anything to do with orthodoxy and religion. But the philosophies generally known as Samkhya and Yoga—i.e. the philosophies commonly associated with the names of Kapila and Patanjali—are claimed by later Vedic orthodoxy as belonging to its own tradition. How then can Kautilya so freely associate the Samkhya and Yoga with the Lokayata? Besides, how is it that he is silent about the Nyaya-Vaisesika which, among the traditional Indian philosophies, best answers his concept of *anviksiki*?

Can it be that Kautilya's enumeration of the *anviksiki*-s is simply fanciful? The fact is just the contrary. What it hints at helps us to get rid of many a fanciful idea about the Indian philosophical situation, which gain popularity evidently after Kautilya. Our point, therefore, is to understand his statement rightly. But modern scholars, with only a few notable exceptions, generally miss this understanding. This is largely because they usually raise a wrong question: How can Kautilya assign to the thoroughly disrespectable Lokayata the same philosophical status as that of the venerable Samkhya and Yoga? Concentrating mainly on this, they ignore the more important question: What can Kautilya really mean by Yoga in his list of the *anviksiki*-s? We are going to see that this question, rightly under-

stood, solves the apparent mystery of his silence over the Nyaya-Vaisesika.

It is generally believed that in Kautilya's statement Yoga simply means the Yoga system of Patanjali, i.e. the philosophical position of the famous *Yoga-sutra*. Yet this is absurd. First, Patanjali never claims that his *Yoga-sutra* has an independent philosophical position. Each chapter of the text ends with the admission that it is an exposition of the yoga practices in accordance with—or based upon—the Samkhya view: *yoga-sastre samkhya-pravacane* etc. This, as Pandit Sukhlalji Sanghavi[17] very rightly comments, shows that the Samkhya is only one of the philosophies with which the yoga practices are associated and that during the time of Patanjali there are evidently other expositions of the yoga from the standpoint of philosophies other than the Samkhya.

It is not difficult to see why this is so. Yoga primarily means not a philosophy but a body of certain psycho-physical practices supposed to be conducive to certain physical as well as supernormal powers. The practices are in fact very old, concrete material relics of the ancient Indus civilisation testify to their prevalence even in the third millennium BC.[18] In the course of centuries, these become the floating possessions as it were of all sorts of religious beliefs and are associated with a variety of philosophical speculations, of which the Samkhya is only one. All that needs to be said about it is said by S. N. Dasgupta[19]: "the yoga practices have undergone diverse changes in diverse schools, but none of these shows any predilection for the Samkhya . . . Patanjali was probably the most notable person, for he not only collected the different forms of yoga practices, . . . but grafted them all on the Samkhya metaphysics and gave them the form in which they have been handed down to us. Vacaspati and Vijnana Bhiksu . . .

17. Sukhlalji Sanghavi *Darsana aur cintana* (Hindi) i.251-2.
18. Marshall i.53-4; Vats i.129-30; Wheeler plate xvii A; Chanda in MASI xli.25; etc.
19. Dasgupta i.228-9.

agree with us in holding that Patanjali was not the founder of the yoga but an editor."

It has to be noted further that while grafting the yoga practices on the Samkhya metaphysics, Patanjali wants to introduce one innovation. The Samkhya, as a philosophy, is committed atheism; the reasoned rejection of the possible existence of god is for it a basic theoretical requirement. But Patanjali tries somehow or other to insert the concept of god into his version of the Samkhya, which therefore is often referred to by the peculiar name 'Samkhya with god' (*sesvara-samkhya*). But the result is quite peculiar. Since the Samkhya is inherently atheistic, god—after being introduced into it by Patanjali—remains like a puppet without any divine function. He is neither the creator of the world, nor its moral governor. "In the Yoga system, the passages that treat of god stand disconnected and are, indeed, in direct contradiction to the aim of this system."[20]

More about Patanjali's Yoga is not necessary here. It is already evident that there can be nothing in this quaint account of some hoary practices mixed up with the Samkhya philosophy to answer even vaguely Kautilya's conception of *anviksiki*. Besides, can Kautilya really mean that the genuinely rationalist and secular tradition in Indian thought is represented by Samkhya, Samkhya-with-god and the Lokayata?

By Yoga, Kautilya cannot mean the yoga system of Patanjali. But what can he possibly mean by yoga as a form of *anviksiki?* A clear answer to this is suggested in Vatsyayana's commentary on *Nyaya-sutra*, for understanding which, however, we have first to be clear about a technical concept of the Nyaya philosophy.

In Nyaya terminology, it is called the *pratitantra-siddhanta* or 'proved doctrine on the basis of one's own branch of learning.' In simpler words, it means the characteristic peculiarity of one system of thought which it shares only with its allied system but which is unaccepted by the

20. Garbe in ERE xii.831.

other or alien systems. The *Nyaya-sutra*[21] defines it as that "which is accepted in one's allied system of thought but unaccepted in other systems of thought." Vatsyayana wants to explain this with suitable examples and the examples he uses are very interesting. "For example," says Vatsyayana, "those of the Samkhyas are: the non-existent never comes into being, nor the existent ever absolutely destroyed... Those of the followers of Yoga are: ... the non-existent comes to being and the existent absolutely destroyed." What does Vatsyayana mean by this?

As the characteristic peculiarity of Samkhya, Vatsyayana mentions here the view of causality according to which the effect is nothing new or that it is already preexisting in the cause (*sat-karya-vada*). That such a view is characteristic of the Samkhya is of course very well-known. Besides, Patanjali's exposition of the Yoga, in so far as it pretends to be a philosophy, fully subscribes to it. This shows that by Yoga, Vatsyayana cannot mean here the socalled yoga system of Patanjali. The distinctive peculiarity of the followers of Yoga, as mentioned by him, is a view of causality that is the very opposite of the Samkhya view. In Indian terminology, this is *asat-karya-vada* or *arambha-vada*, i.e. the view according to which the effect—as contrasted with the cause—is something new altogether. In the history of Indian philosophy, only the followers of the Nyaya-Vaisesika subscribe to it. But how can Vatsyayana refer to it as a philosophical position characteristic of the followers of the Yoga? There is only one answer to it. In this particular context, by Yoga he simply means the Nyaya-Vaisesika. But how can this be at all possible for so eminent a representative of the Nyaya-Vaisesika as Vatsyayana? There can, again, be only one answer to it. He knows that there is another—and perhaps earlier—way of referring to his own philosophy. And this is Yoga.

Thanks to the stupendous scholarship of traditional Indian pandits like Phanibhusana Tarkavagisa and Kuppu-

21. Gotama *NS* i.1.29.

swami Sastri, we are now in possession of clear evidences to see that this is actually so—that, in other words, Yoga is in fact an old name of the Nyaya-Vaisesika. Here is a brief summary of Phanibhusana's[22] discussion of the point:

Vatsyayana mentions a number of theses maintained by the followers of Yoga. But whom does he refer to by this name? They cannot be the followers of the well-known Yoga system of Patanjali, because the theses referred to are flatly contrary to their doctrines. On the other hand, by the followers of Yoga we can understand here only the Naiyayikas and Vaisesikas, because the doctrines mentioned by Vatsyayana as their *pratitantra-siddhanta*-s are cnaracteristic of the Naiyayikas and Vaisesikas alone. In any case, the Vaisesika system was known by the name Yoga in ancient times. In accordance with this tradition, the Jaina philosopher Vidyananda Svamin in his *Patra-pariksa*, quotes a *sutra* of Kanada and adds, 'As it is said by the followers of Yoga.' Gunaratna also opens his discussion of the Nyaya with the words. 'The Naiyayikas, also known as the followers of Yoga (*yauga*-s) . . .' Vatsyayana follows the same tradition and mentions the doctrines characteristic of the Vaisesikas as those of the followers of Yoga. But these doctrines are also the doctrines of the Naiyayikas. Thus by the followers of Yoga is to be understood the followers of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas.

To this is to be added the following comment of Kuppuswami Sastri[23]:

Kautilya's *Arthasastra* mentions the types of thought comprising *anviksiki* in the statement *samkhyam yogo lokayatam cetyanviksiki* (*anviksiki* comprises only of Samkhya, Yoga and Lokayata) . . . In this extract from Kautilya, there is no specific mention of Nyaya and Vaisesika as such . . . Those who are sufficiently familiar with the use of word *yoga* in its old sense of Vaisesika, as it is found used for instance in Vatsyayana's *bhasya* on i.1.29 are not likely to consider it a strained interpretation to take the word *yoga*, as used in Kautilya, in the sense of Vaisesika. In fact, according to Vacaspati Misra's *Tatparya-tika* and the *Bhasyacandra* on *bhasya* i.1.29, the word *yoga* may

22. Summary of Phanibhusana's view in Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya NP i.103f.

23. K. Sastri PIL intro p. xiv f.

be taken in the somewhat comprehensive sense of Nyaya including the Vaisesika.

But what, it will be asked, accounts for this ancient tradition? There are grounds for the use of the name Yoga for the Nyaya-Vaisesika. One of these is pointed to by Phanibhusana, another by Kuppuswami. The two together indicate the fundamentals of the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy, namely atomism and logic.

According to Phanibhusana,[24] the word *yoga* is a synonym of *samyoga* or conjunction: the Nyaya-Vaisesikas are called the followers of Yoga because in their view the universe results from the conjunction of the eternal atoms. But *yoga* also meant logic, because, as Kuppuswami[25] adds, it is a synonym for *yukti* or reasoning, which is the special theme of the Nyaya philosophy. This is the sense in which Vatsyayana's use of the name Yoga is explained in *Bhasyacandra*: "those for whom yoga in the sense of reasoning (*yukti*) is the main theme."

Jacobi completely misses all this and is led to a wrong conjecture concerning Kautilya's silence over the Nyaya-Vaisesika. "All the more it is therefore of importance," says he, "that Kautilya does not mention the name Nyaya and Vaisesika while enumerating the systems recognised by him as *anviksiki*. From this we can draw the inference with certainty that at this time, i.e. 300 BC, Nyaya and Vaisesika had not received the recognition as philosophical systems, not to speak of the *sutra*-s of Gautama and Kanada in the form in which they are now before us." Such a conclusion is unwarranted, for whatever may be the actual date of *Nyaya-sutra* and *Vaisesika-sutra* in their present form, the fact is that Kautilya does refer to the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy, though by its older name Yoga.

We may now sum up this discussion: From Kautilya's use of the word *anviksiki* for philosophy and from the

24. See Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya NP i.104.
25. K. Sastri PIL intro. p. xvi.

sharp contrast drawn by him between *anviksiki* and *trayi*, we are led to infer that rationalism and secularism characterise his understanding of philosophy proper. In this sense, he recognises three—and only three—philosophies. They are Samkhya, Nyaya-Vaisesika and Lokayata.

But this is precisely the view that we want to arrive at, only with this addition that these three philosophies constitute the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism.

8. Samkhya and Secularism

Even admitting that by Yoga Kautilya really means the Nyaya-Vaisesika, there is still a serious difficulty in accepting the view that, along with the Samkhya and Lokayata, it constitutes the truly secular and rationalist tradition in Indian philosophy. The difficulty is created by the firmly fixed later assumption that while Lokayata is admittedly a heterodox or *nastika* philosophy, Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika are orthodox or *astika* philosophies. How then can we at all take these three philosophies as belonging basically to the same class?

The term orthodox or *astika*, as we have already seen, is used in Indian philosophy in the restricted sense of 'being based on the scriptural authority of the Veda', just as its opposite—heterodox or *nastika*—is supposed to mean a philosophy that flouts this authority. We have also seen that the criterion for classifying philosophical views into these two types is suggested neither by philosophers nor by philologists but by the law-giver Manu, whose own interest in philosophy is clearly extra-philosophical. Hence there is really no ground to take the convention of this classification as seriously as is ordinarily done. Any qualitative difference between Lokayata on the one hand and Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika on the other, in so far as it is based merely on the dictate of the law-giver, can perhaps be ignored. Still the question of the possible scriptural affiliation of Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika is a serious one, and it is necessary to have clarification on this. If such

an affiliation is actually there, we can hardly view these two philosophies as belonging to the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism, as we propose to do.

Let us first take up the question of Samkhya.

That this philosophy is very old, that much of its original features are lost to us, that even in the extant expositions like *Samkhya-karika* and *Samkhya-sutra* the Samkhya doctrines are substantially modified—are some of the points already discussed by modern scholars. Without entering into these, we shall try to answer here mainly two questions. First, in spite of the doctrinal modifications suffered by Samkhya even in its available expositions, do we have in these any indication of its attitude to Veda and Vedic beliefs? Second, do we have any indication of the attitude to Samkhya in the Vedic literature itself?

The theme of the first two couplets of *Samkhya-karika* is as follows:

The main purpose of this philosophy is the removal of suffering in all forms. It is a fact no doubt that certain remedies for suffering are actually observed—e.g., medicine offers remedy for physical suffering. Still, the philosophy is not useless, because such 'observed remedies' cannot remove suffering totally and absolutely. Like the remedies actually observed, those mentioned in the Veda (*anusravika*=*sruti*) are incomplete, because they are impure, subject to decay and marked by excesses. The opposite of this—i.e. the knowledge of the fundamentals of the Samkhya—is, therefore, the really desirable one.

Thus *Samkhya-karika* opens with a definite attitude to Veda. And the salient points of this are:

1. The remedies for suffering suggested by Veda are no better than those actually observed in ordinary life, e.g. the remedies suggested by medical science.

2. The Vedic remedies are marked by three defects. They are (a) impure, (b) merely temporary and (c) marked by excess.

3. The knowledge that Samkhya stands for is the very opposite of Vedic remedies. There can be no doubt about

this point, because the text clearly says *tat-viparitah*, 'the opposite of that'.

Can this be said from the standpoint of a genuinely Veda-based philosophy? Interestingly, in spite of the strange tendency sometimes expressed in *Samkhya-sutra* to tune Samkhya to the Upanisadic idealism, the original hostility of this philosophy to Veda is yet to be completely washed away even in it. Vedic recommendations, it declares, are no better than the worldly ones.[26] Veda, it adds, cannot lead one to the summum bonum, because the results of Vedic rituals have a beginning, and therefore also an end.[27]

Thus, even from the fragments that survive of this philosophy, it is not difficult to see that it must have originally been opposed to Veda. As Garbe rightly says, "Originally the Samkhya must have taken up a position of direct opposition to the doctrines of the *Brahmanas*, as is proved inter alia by its polemic against their ceremonial."[28]

But what about the attitude to Samkhya expressed in Veda, particularly in its philosophical portions, namely the Upanisads? There is a tendency among some of the modern scholars to discover the germs of original Samkhya in the Upanisads. However, I have elsewhere[29] quoted a considerable number of such Upanisadic passages and I have tried to show that, though these passages contain some of the typical terminologies of Samkhya philosophy, the real purpose of mentioning them in the Upanisads is for either rejecting them outright or proclaiming the superiority of the Upanisadic view over Samkhya.

It will be tedious to quote and examine all these passages over again. Instead let us see here only one evidence of the Upanisads, particularly because of some added interest it has for us. This is to be found in *Svetasvatara Upanisad*, which is usually considered pre-Buddha. Of all the Upanisads, it presents the idealist view with a

26. *Samkhya-sutra* i.6.
27. *Ib.* i.82.
28. Garbe in ERE xi.189.
29. Chattopadhyaya L 424ff.

pronounced theistic bias. Hence it has to settle its account with the atheistic and antitheistic views then in circulation. The most prominent of such views, as judged from the Upanisad itself, is that of Kapila—the view, according to which, the world evolves by natural laws (*svabhava*) from primeval matter, called *prakrti* or *pradhana*.

The author of this Upanisad wants repeatedly—and with great zeal—to establish the superiority of his view of one god over the fundamentals of Samkhya. But the way he does it is very interesting. He does not reject outright the Samkhya views as the utterance of some deluded person, which he does while dismissing the doctrines according to which 'time' or 'natural law' is the first cause. He offers instead full recognition to the importance of the doctrine of *pradhana* or *prakrti*, insisting only on the denial of its autonomy. *Prakrti* is subservient to god. God rules over it and even produces it out of his own magical power:

> What is perishable is the *pradhana*. What is immortal and imperishable is the soul. Over both the perishable and the soul, rules the one god. By meditating upon him, by uniting with him, and by reflecting on his being more and more, there is complete cessation from the illusion of the world.[30]

This illusion of the world, the only valid escape from which is to be sought in the union with god, is due to primeval matter no doubt. But god himself is its creator and he creates it perhaps to have some fun (*lila*)[31]:

> Now, one should know that *prakrti* is illusion (*maya*) and that the mighty lord is the illusion-maker (*mayin*). This whole world is pervaded with beings that are parts of him.
>
> The one god, who covers himself, like a spider, with threads produced from *pradhana* according to his own nature—may he grant us entrance in *brahma*.

Significantly, *Svetasvatara Upanisad* questions neither the antiquity of Kapila nor the great wisdom he possesses. It only declares that the very wisdom he possesses is

30. *Sv.Up.* i.10. 31. *Ib.* iv.10 & vi.10.

derived from god (whom Kapila denies!) and that howsoever ancient he may be, god witnesses the sage being born![32]:

The one, who rules over each and every single source as well as all forms and all sources—who at first filled with wisdom the sage Kapila as he was being born and witnessed him being born.

Such are the ways in which the superiority of the Upanisadic view is proclaimed over that of the Samkhya. These are evidences, no doubt, of the power and popularity of Samkhya already at the time of the Upanisad. But these are also evidences of the fact that the Upanisadic thinker finds his view directly confronted by the Samkhya, without negating which he cannot preach his own philosophy.

If the Samkhya is thus considered too important a *purvapaksa* to be ignored by the Upanisadic thinker, we have to conclude that the internal evidences of Samkhya showing its hostility to Veda are corroborated by the internal evidences of Veda showing its hostility to Samkhya. Therefore, far from having been a Veda-based philosophy, original Samkhya is presumably opposed to Veda.

Dandekar[33] suggests that the origin of Samkhya is to be traced to the "pre-Vedic non-Aryan thought complex". Others among modern scholars who hold similar views are Garbe, H. P. Sastri and Zimmer, whom I have quoted elsewhere, but among whom Garbe[34] may be quoted once again:

The origin of the Samkhya system appears in the proper light only when we understand that in these regions of India which were little influenced by Brahmanism the first attempt had been made to solve the riddles of the world and of our existence merely by means of reason. For the Samkhya philosophy is, in its essence, not only atheistic but also inimical to Veda. All appeal to *sruti* in the Samkhya texts lying before us are subsequent additions. We may altogether remove the Vedic elements grafted upon the system and it will not in the least be affected

32. *Ib.* v.2.
33. Dandekar in ABORI 1968. 444.
34. Garbe ACOPV ... intro. pp. xx-xxi.

thereby. The Samkhya philosophy had been originally, and has remained up to the present day, in its real contents, un-Vedic and independent of the Brahmanical tradition.

9. Nyaya-Vaisesika and the Technique of Evading Inquisition

But, it will be asked, what about the case of the Nyaya-Vaisesika? Is not the loyalty of this philosophy to Vedic orthodoxy quite clear and unmistakable? Does not Kanada declare more than once that Veda is revelation? Does not Gotama want even to *prove* the unquestioned validity of Veda?

They do this no doubt. There is something like an exaggerated anxiety on their part to profess veneration for Veda. However, since they are philosophers above all, the only relevant question for our understanding of this veneration is: How much philosophically serious is this intended to be? We are going to see that it is practically nil, that in the capacity of philosophers proper none can care less for Veda than the founders of Nyaya-Vaisesika. Indeed the main theme of their philosophy—atomism and logic—being thoroughly secular in spirit and established on the rational analysis of empirical data alone, has neither the need nor the scope for drawing on Veda. On the contrary, the real philosophical portions of Veda—or at least the most dominant trend of the speculations recorded in them—go flatly against the essentials of Nyaya-Vaisesika.

Still the fact is that Nyaya-Vaisesikas make a great deal of fuss to pledge loyalty to Veda. How are we to explain this? Since its significance cannot be genuinely philosophical, the only significance that it can have is non-philosophical or extra-philosophical. But what concretely does this mean? We are going to argue that at least for Kanada and Gotama, the professed piety for Veda is only a technique of evading the censorship of law-givers. In the conditions in which they live there is a tremendous resistance of Vedic orthodoxy against the sciences, hence the expo-

nents of Indian atomism and logic find it comparatively safe to advance their own ideas only under the protective care of an apparent veneration for Veda and the demands of Brahmanical orthodoxy.

The decisive proofs of this are of course the internal evidences of the *Vaisesika-sutra* and the *Nyaya-sutra.* Before we pass on to discuss them, it may be worthwhile to note how, under pressure of orthodoxy, Indian scientists are often obliged to concede to certain favourite myths of the vested interests, and this in spite of knowing full well that the scientific truths they themselves arrive at are totally incompatible with these myths. In the general context of this, it may be easier to understand how Kanada and Gotama—who have in fact so much to contribute to the tradition of Indian science—pretend to subscribe to the myth of Veda and its scriptural authority.

10. Pressure of Indian Orthodoxy on Indian Science

Fortunately we have in the writings of al-Biruni (AD 973-1048)—who travels in India during AD 1017-1030, and who, during this travel, acquires profound knowledge of Indian astronomy—a remarkable analysis of how the most eminent Indian astronomers like Varahamihira (c 6th century AD) and Brahmagupta (c 7th-8th centuries AD) want to reconcile their own views to the Brahmanical myths about the eclipse, in spite of the full awareness that such myths flatly go against the scientific truth which they arrive at.

Observes al-Biruni[35]:

> It is perfectly known to the Hindu astronomers that the moon is eclipsed by the shadow of the earth, and sun is eclipsed by the moon. Hereon they have based their computations in the astronomical handbooks and other works.

In substantiation of this, he quotes extensively from *Brhat-samhita* of Varahamihira. In this passage quoted, Varahamihira first refers to the myth sanctioned by Brahmanical orthodoxy, according to which the eclipse is due to the Head (Rahu) devouring the sun. He next shows

35. al-Berubi (Sachau) ii. 107.

why such a myth is prima facie absurd and what is the real scientific explanation of the eclipse. Strangely, however, he adds to all this a rationale of the Brahmanical rituals based precisely on the myth he himself so vigorously rejects!

In *Brhat-samhita*,[36] Varahamihira says:

v.1: Some scholars maintain that the *Head* belonged to the Daityas, and that his mother was Simhika. After the angels had fetched the *amrta* (nectar) out of the ocean, they asked Visnu to distribute it among them. When he did so, the *Head* also came, resembling the angels in shape, and associated himself with them. When Visnu handed him a portion of the *amrta*, he took and drank it. But then Visnu perceived who it was, hit him with his round *cakra*, and cut off his head. However, the head remained alive on account of the *amrta* in its mouth, whilst the body died, since it had not yet partaken of the *amrta*, and the force of the latter had not yet spread through it. Then the *Head*, humbling itself, spoke: 'For what sin has this been done?' Thereupon he was recompensed by being raised to heaven and by being made one of its inhabitants.

v.2: Others say that the *Head* has a body like sun and moon, but that it is black and dark, and therefore cannot be seen in heaven...

Comments al-Biruni,[37] "after having finished the relation of these absurdities, Varahamihira continues":

v.4: If the *Head* had a body, it would act by immediate contact, whilst we find that he eclipses from a distance, when between him and the moon there is an interval of six zodiacal signs. Besides, his motion does not increase nor decrease, so that we cannot imagine an eclipse to be caused by his body reaching the spot of the lunar eclipse...

v.8: As has been mentioned by scholars who enjoy the help of god, an eclipse of the moon is her entering the shadow of the earth, and an eclipse of the sun consists in this that the moon covers and hides the sun from us. Therefore, the lunar eclipse will never revolve from the west nor the solar eclipse from the east.

v.9: A long shadow stretches away from the earth, in like manner as the shadow of a tree.

36. *Ib.*

37. *Ib.* ii. 108.

v.10: When the moon has only little latitude, standing in the seventh sign of its distance from the sun, and if it does not stand too far north or south, in that case the moon enters the shadow of the earth and is eclipsed thereby. The first contact takes place on the side of the east.

v.11: When the sun is reached by the moon from the west, the moon covers the sun, as if a portion of a cloud covered him. The amount of this covering differs in different regions.

v.12: Because that which covers the moon is large, her light wanes when one-half of it is eclipsed; and because that which covers the sun is not large, and the rays are powerful notwithstanding the eclipse.

v.13: The nature of the *Head* has nothing whatever to do with the lunar and solar eclipses. On this subject the scholars in their books agree.

Continues al-Biruni,[38] "After having described the nature of the two eclipses, as *he* understands them, he complains of those who do not know this, and says: 'However, common people are always very loud in proclaiming the *Head* to be the cause of the eclipse, and they say: If the *Head* did not appear and did not bring about the eclipse, the Brahmins would not at that moment undergo an obligatory washing.'" Varahamihira answers:

v.14: The reason of this is that the *Head* humiliated itself after it had been cut off, and received from Brahman a portion of the offering which the Brahmins offer to the fire at the moment of an eclipse.

v.15: Therefore, he is near the spot of the eclipse, searching for his portion. Therefore, at that time people mention him frequently, and consider him as the cause of the eclipse, although he has nothing whatsoever to do with it; for the eclipse depends entirely upon the uniformity and the declination of the orbit of the moon.

Remarkable indeed is this statement of Varahamihira, when it is clear that he does not believe in the Head (Rahu) at all! Evidently he knows that though the Head is not really there, there is the pressure of the Brahmanical orthodoxy on the scientists and it is daring too much for

38. *Ib.* ii. 109.

one to question the validity of the Brahmanical rituals. Somehow or other he has to justify the rituals or find out a rationale of these. Comments al-Biruni[39]:

The latter words of Varahamihira, who in passages quoted previously has already revealed himself to us as a man who accurately knows the shape of the world, are odd and surprising. However, he seems sometimes to side with the Brahmins, to whom he belonged and from whom he could not separate himself. Still he does not deserve to be blamed, as on the whole, his foot stands firmly on the basis of the truth, and he clearly speaks out the truth . . .

Would to God that all distinguished men followed his example! But look, for instance at Brahmagupta, who is certainly the most distinguished of their astronomers. For as he was one of the Brahmins who read in their Puranas that the sun is lower than the moon, and who therefore require a head biting the sun in order that he should be eclipsed, he shirks the truth and lends his support to imposture, if he did not—and this we think by no means impossible—from intense disgust at them, speak as he spoke simply in order to mock them, or under the compulsion of some mental derangement, like a man whom death is about to rob of his consciousness. The words in question are found in the first chapter of his *Brahmasiddhanta*:

'Some people think that the eclipse is not caused by the *Head*. This, however, is a foolish idea, for it is *he* in fact who eclipses, and the generality of the inhabitants of the world say that it is the *Head* who eclipses. The Veda, which is the word of god from the mouth of Brahman, says that the *Head* eclipses, likewise the book *smrti* composed by Manu, and the *samhita* composed by Garga, the son of Brahman. On the contrary, Varahamihira, Srishena, Aryabhata, and Visnucandra maintain that the eclipse is not caused by the *Head*, but by the moon and the shadow of the earth, in direct opposition to all (to the generality of men), and from enmity against the just-mentioned dogma. For *if the Head does not cause the eclipse, all the usages of the Brahmins which they practise at the moment of an eclipse*, viz their rubbing themselves with warm oil, and other works of prescribed worship, *would be illusory and not be rewarded by heavenly bliss*. If a man declares these things to be illusory, he stands outside of the generally

39. *Ib.* ii. 110.

acknowledged dogma, and that is not allowed. Manu says in the *smrti*: When the *Head* keeps the sun or moon in eclipse, all waters on earth become pure, and in purity like the water of the Ganges. The Veda says: The *Head* is the son of a woman of the daughters of the Daityas, called Sainaka (? Simhika?). Therefore, people practise the well-known works of piety, and therefore those authors must cease to oppose the generality, for *everything which is in the Veda, smrti and samhita is true.'*

Continues al-Biruni[40]

If Brahmagupta in this respect, is one of those of whom god says, *They have denied our signs, although their hearts knew them clearly, from wickedness or haughtiness,* we shall not argue with him, but only whisper into his ears: If people must under circumstances give up opposing the religious codes (as seems to be your case), why then do you order people to be pious if you forget to be so yourself? *Why do you, after having spoken such words, then begin to calculate the diameter of the moon in order to explain her eclipsing the sun, and the diameter of the shadow of the earth in order to explain its eclipsing the moon? Why do you compute both eclipses in agreement with the theory of those heretics, and not according to the views of those with whom you think it proper to agree? If the Brahmins are ordered to practise some act of worship or something else at the occurrence of an eclipse, the eclipse is only the date of these things, not their cause...*

I, for my part, am inclined to the belief that that which made Brahmagupta speak the above-mentioned words (which involve a sin against conscience) was something of a calamitous fate, like that of Socrates, which had befallen him, notwithstanding the abundance of his knowledge and the sharpness of his intellect, and notwithstanding his extreme youth at the time. For he wrote the Brahmasiddhanta when he was only thirty years of age. If this indeed is his excuse, we accept it and herewith drop the matter.

Passages italicised above are those which al-Biruni himself wants to emphasise. The pressure of Indian orthodoxy on the Indian scientists is so palpable to him, because he is only a visiting scientist having himself nothing to do with the Brahmanical creed.

40. *Ib.* ii. 111-12.

11. Atomism and Logic with Apparent Piety

If the greatest Indian astronomer Brahmagupta, in spite of the full knowledge of the scientific explanation of the eclipse, has to declare in the very first chapter of his astronomical masterpiece complete loyalty to Veda and *Manusmrti*—nay, has even to go to the extent of condemning those who, in defiance of the scriptures, offer the scientific explanation of the eclipse—the case of Kanada and Gotama is much more desperate. What they want to contest is not merely a stray myth like that of the Head (Rahu) devouring the sun but the dominant world outlook as actually worked out in the philosophical portion of Veda, the important features of which are the denial of the reality of the material world and the damnation of our normal sources of the knowledge of it. What then can they do but work under the cover of an apparent fidelity to the scriptures, so that they may evade the censorship of the Brahmanical orthodoxy and its spokesmen, the Indian law-givers. We give here a brief account of how they do this.

Let us begin with Kanada's *Vaisesika-sutra*. It opens with the declaration that its purpose is only to explain *dharma*,[41] i.e., piety in the standard of Vedic orthodoxy. Nothing can be more pleasing for Vedic orthodoxy. But does Kanada actually fulfil this promise? He does not. The text discusses mainly the six *padartha*-s or categories like substance, quality, etc. under which everything knowable and namable in the world is sought to be classified in the Vaisesika philosophy, occasionally sprinkling on this discussion the glorification of the priests and their privileges. Thus the purpose of the book as stated in its opening declaration flatly goes against the purpose actual-

41. Attempt is sometimes made to interpret the world *dharma* in the sense of *padartha*; but this does not agree with the subsequent statements of the *Vaisesika-sutra*. Interestingly, with all the show of veneration for the Veda, the work does not recognise scripture (*agama*) as an independent source of knowledge. It admits only two sources of knowledge—perception and inference—and considers verbal testimony to be a form of the latter.

ly carried out in the book itself. This is clearly anomalous, and the anomaly is traditionally noted in an 'authentic popular verse' which sarcastically says,

The discussion of the six categories on the part of one who wants to explain *dharma* is like going to the Himalayas with the resolution of going to the sea.

From the standpoint of the content of the book, its opening declaration is thus nothing but a subterfuge. But the subterfuge is not unnecessary, otherwise the book can easily be branded as heretical. Kanada wants to avoid such a possibility at any cost. Therefore evidently feeling not fully secure merely with the opening declaration, in the very third sentence of the book he proclaims that Veda is revelation. Even this is not enough. He makes the same proclamation—word for word—in the concluding sentence of the book. Nothing is more peculiar from the standpoint of the Indian literary norm. In a work in the form of the *sutra*-s or cryptic mnemonic aphorisms, the economy of the use of words is considered so important that the successful elimination even of a single word is said to give its author the pleasure comparable to that of having a son. And yet Kanada does not hesitate to repeat even an entire sentence! Can it be because he is unaware of the literary norm? It being absurd to imagine this, we are left with only another alternative. He does it deliberately, because he is anxious to get away with his work uncensored. How can there be any suspicion about a work from the standpoint of Vedic orthodoxy when the work pledges loyalty to Veda not only at its beginning but also at the end?

From this point of view, the evidence of the *Nyaya-sutra* is much more interesting. In his *History of Indian Logic*, S. C. Vidyabhusana quotes a considerable number of evidences to show how intense is the orthodox hostility to logic. He concludes this survey with the remark, "It seems that the unfavourable criticism to which *anviksiki* (logic) had long been exposed, terminated practically in the first century AD. when, under the name of the *Nyaya-sutra*, it accepted the authority of the Vedas and pro-

pounded the doctrine of syllogistic reasoning, the validity of which was never challenged."[42] This is substantially true. To understand the whole truth, however, we have to see in some details how exactly *Nyaya-sutra* accepts the authority of Veda.

There is no doubt that in *Nyaya-sutra*[43] Gotama gives the impression of defending with great zeal the validity of Veda. He mentions the general grounds for questioning this validity in the form of a possible objection: "It (Veda) has no validity, because it is vitiated by falsehood, self-contradiction and repetition." Gotama gives the impression of answering these objections elaborately. He argues that Veda does not have any of these alleged defects: there is no falsehood, no self-contradiction and no repetition. Nevertheless, if we read between the lines of what Gotama actually says we are sure to be amazed by some of his arguments which cunningly hint that the authority of Veda is not to be taken seriously after all.

How is the validity of Veda sought to be rejected by those that impute falsehood to it? Vatsyayana explains their position as follows. Veda prescribes many rites, one of these being the rite for obtaining a son (*putrakama-isti*). The Vedic injunctions can be considered as free from falsehood only if the performance of the prescribed rite results in the attainment of the desired object—if, for example, by performing the rite for having a son one actually gets a son. This, according to the opponent of Vedic orthodoxy, is not observed to take place. As Vatsyayana puts their point, "Because there is the defect of falsehood in the case for the rite for having a son. In spite of the Vedic injunction that a person desirous of having a son should perform the prescribed rite for having a son and in spite of the performance of the rite, the birth of a son is not observed. From the falsehood of the injunction, the result of which is empirically verifiable, it follows that the injunctions like 'One desirous of heaven should perform the

42. Vidyabhusana 39.

43. Gotama *NS* ii.1.57ff.

Agnihotra rite'—the result of which is not empirically verifiable—must also be false."[44]

Vatsyayana's refutation of this needs to be quoted at some length:[45]

There is no defect of falsehood in the injunction concerning the rite for having a son. Why? Because (the non-attainment of the result is due to) the imperfections of the ritual performance, of the performer and of the means employed. The mother and the father, conjoined together, obtain the son through the rite. The means employed for the rite are the prerequisites for its performance. The performers of the rite are the parents. The ritual performance is the specific form of their union. The son is obtained from the perfection of these three. From the imperfection (of all or any of these) results the opposite. In the case of the rite, the imperfection in the performance consists in the violation of the details. When the performer is ignorant or immoral, there is imperfection of the performer... In the case of the procreative activity (of the parents), the imperfection of the performance is perverse union; female disease and male sterility are the imperfections of the performer. The imperfections of the means concerned are those already mentioned (in connection with the rite). In ordinary practice also there is the rule: 'One desiring fire should strike the pieces of wood.' In this case, the imperfection of the performance is the wrong way of striking, the imperfection of the performer is due to the error in understanding and making effort, the imperfection in the means employed consists in the wetness and hollowness of the striking wood. The absence of the desired result in this case is not indicative of the defect of falsehood, because the result is found to be produced in the presence of perfection. (The Vedic injunction, namely) 'A person desirous of having a son should perform the prescribed rite for having a son'—is not different from the rule of ordinary practice.

Let us ask ourselves a simple question. What, in this entire argument, the actual efficacy of the Vedic ritual is after all left with? If there is female disease, male sterility or perverse union, there is no son in spite of the performance of the prescribed ritual. The performance of the ritual

44. Vatsyayana on *NS* ii.1.57.

45. *Ib.* ii.1.58.

results in getting a son only when the male and the female are physically fit for procreation and they unite in the right manner. Can this be taken as a serious argument in defence of the efficacy of the ritual itself? Since Gotama clearly speaks of the different conventions of the different peoples of different countries,[46] it will be too much to assume that he is ignorant of the fact that millions of physically fit couples get sons by proper union, and this in spite of not performing the prescribed ritual. His argument thus amounts to the assertion that only when the empirically known conditions for obtaining a son are satisfied, one gets a son; in the absence of these a son is not born in spite of the performance of the ritual. This means that the ritual by itself is irrelevant for getting a son. It has no intrinsic efficacy to yield the desired result; the result is obtained only when the physical factors empirically known to cause the result are present, whether one performs the ritual or not. Is this a defence of the Vedic belief or just a mockery of it and this in spite of the verbal demonstration of the faith in Veda?

That this verbal veneration for Veda is not to be taken very seriously is further suggested by the cunning logician when he goes on to argue that there is really nothing *super*-natural or *extra*-ordinary about the validity of Veda, because this validity has the same status as the ordinary prescriptions concerning purely natural phenomena. This is already evidenced from the concluding remarks of Vatsyayana just quoted and this becomes clearer from the subsequent statements of Gotama. Vatsyayana says that after defending the validity of Veda by way of answering the objections raised against it, Gotama proceeds to offer positive considerations in favour of this validity. But what are these positive considerations?

Gotama says, "Like the validity of the *mantra* and *ayurveda*, its (i.e. of the Veda) validity is proved because of the trustworthiness of the person uttering it."[47] The im-

46. Gotama *NS* ii.1.56.

47. *Ib.* ii.1.68.

plications of this are devastating for the orthodox view of Vedic validity, for this amounts to bringing down Vedic validity to a purely mundane—even banal—level. All these become clear from Vatsyayana's explanation of the statement. Before quoting that, however, it may be useful to try to be clear about the words *mantra* and *ayurveda* as used by Gotama in the statement.

The word *mantra* cannot mean here the *mantra*-part of Veda, for in that case the statement as a whole hardly makes any sense. The later interpreters are thus generally inclined to take the word of the *sutra* in the sense of charms and spells used for the purpose of removing poison etc. from the body. In ancient India these are viewed as parts of the medical technique, as they still are in the rural areas of the country. *Ayurveda* simply means medical science: it literally implies the 'knowledge of life', the word *veda* forming part of it is taken to mean knowledge in its secular sense. We quote here a summary of the view expressed on these words by Phanibhusana Tarkavagisa:[48]

The later Naiyayikas like Visvanatha and his followers claimed that the *mantra*-s, the spells to remove poison etc., as well as Ayurveda are but parts of Veda. But such a view is not tenable. It may be argued that these *mantra*-s and Ayurveda mean the *Atharvaveda*. However, without overlooking the close relation between Ayurveda and *Atharvaveda*, it is wrong to include the former into the latter. From the clear statements of Caraka and Susruta, the spokesmen of Ayurveda, it is evident that they do not consider their medical treatise to be part of the *Atharvaveda*. The word *veda*, in Ayurveda does not stand for scripture or *sruti*. Further, Jayanta Bhatta strongly argues for the recognition of the *Atharvaveda* as a Veda, but he categorically denies the same status to Ayurveda. Gangesa also does not consider Ayurveda to be a Veda.

Thus, in short, in the statement under consideration, by

48. Summary of Phanibhusana's comment in Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya NP ii.103.

ayurveda Gotama simply means the medical science and by *mantra* the charms that are allied to it. What then does his statement really mean? It simply means that the validity of Veda is on par with the validity of the medical science and of the charms etc. believed to remove poison. In other words, Gotama has already argued that the validity of an utterance is established by the trustworthiness of the person uttering it and that the trustworthy person is one who has direct knowledge of the object and is motivated by the desire of communicating the object as directly known by him. This is palpably so in the case of medical science and of allied medical charms and the validity of Veda is not to be understood in any other sense. It thus seems that Gotama is simply mocking at those that claim absolute scriptural authority of Veda.

Vatsyayana's explanation of the statement needs here to be quoted at length:[49]

What is meant by the validity of Ayurveda? It consists in its veracity, i.e. in the absence of any opposition to facts. This means that the recommendation of Ayurveda, namely 'One performing this attains the desirable and one avoiding that avoids the undesirable',—when properly followed,—the promised results actually take place. The validity of the *mantra*-s consists (in their veracity, i.e.) in this that when the spells intended to remove or dispel poison, evil spirit and lightning are uttered,—these actually take place (i.e. poison etc. are actually removed). What is this (validity) due to? It is due to the veracity of the trustworthy persons. But what, again, constitutes the veracity of the trustworthy persons? The direct knowledge of what is prescribed, compassion for the living beings and the desire to communicate the objects rightly. The trustworthy persons, who have the direct knowledge of what they prescribe, express their compassion for the living beings (by way of advising:) 'This is to be avoided' and 'This is the cause of pain', or 'This is to be attained' and 'This is the means of its attainment'. For the ordinary living beings, who cannot themselves understand, there is no other way of knowing all these except such advice. Without the knowledge, there can be no effort for their attainment and avoidance. And with-

49. Vatsyayana on *NS* ii.1.68.

out such effort, there is no benefit for them. And there is no other means for attaining this benefit except such advice. (The trustworthy persons resolve:) We are going to advise them correctly, as we have ourselves observed, so that by listening to us they (i.e. the ordinary persons) will acquire knowledge and thereby avoid the undesirable and attain the desirable. Thus the communications of trustworthy persons, being characterised by the threefold veracity of their trustworthiness, when actually followed, become fruitful. Therefore, the communications of trustworthy persons are themselves the sources of valid knowledge. From the (validity of the) Ayurveda, which is but the communication of an authoritative person about directly perceptible objects, is to be inferred the validity of the Veda (which is also a communication of trustworthy persons) about objects imperceptible. Further, the Veda is in part—e.g., in the injunction, 'One desirous of a village should perform a rite'—a communication about perceptible objects. From (the validity of) this part is to be inferred (the validity of those parts of the Veda that communicate about objects imperceptible). In ordinary life also, there are many practices based on the advice (of authoritative persons). The trustworthiness of the advisers in ordinary life also is constituted by the direct knowledge of the objects spoken of, the compassion for others and the desire to communicate the objects rightly. (The communications of trustworthy persons in ordinary life) are also sources of valid knowledge, because they are characterised by (these three). The validity of Veda is also inferred from the identity of the seers and speakers. The trustworthy persons, who are the seers and speakers of the Veda, are themselves (the seers and speakers) of Ayurveda etc. Therefore, the validity of the Veda is to be inferred like (the inference of) the validity of Ayurveda.

Can anybody, seriously convinced of the scriptural authority of Veda, argue like this? Can he suggest that the starting point of the understanding of the whole thing is the basic fact of the trustworthiness of medical science, because the statements contained in it best satisfy the conditions thereof? Can he suggest, moreover, that these conditions are peculiarly secular, namely the direct knowledge of something attained by somebody and the communication of this knowledge to his fellow-beings motivated by the compassion for them? But the fact is that only

after establishing all these elaborately, Gotama and Vatsyayana move forward to suggest that the trustworthiness of Vedic statements is to be understood analogically on the model of the trustworthiness of Ayurveda or medical science. As if to leave nothing vague about their own real attitude to the scriptures, Vatsyayana[50] repeats in plain language: *na bhidyate ca laukikat-vakyat-vaidikam vakyam preksapurvakari-purusa pranitatvena,* "also because of being composed intelligently by persons, the scriptural statements do not differ from Vedic ones".

Is this a real defence of the scriptural authority of Veda or a mockery of the belief?

Still the fact remains that Gotama and Vatsyayana make great fuss to show their own veneration for Veda and even to offer definite *proofs* for it. Why do they do this? Presumably for the same reason for which Kanada pads up his own treatise on atomism with an apparent faith in Veda, and Brahmagupta, the greatest astronomer of India —with full awareness of the natural causes of the eclipse— opens his great astronomical work with an apparent defence of the Brahmanical myth about the eclipse, and therefore also of all the Brahmanical ceremonies based on this myth.

Thus, in short, for Gotama and Vatsyayana the pledge to Vedic authority is only a technique of evading inquisition. As the first systematic exponent of Indian logic, Gotama apparently knows that he is going to play a dangerous game, for the stern measures against logic prescribed by the law-givers—the spokesmen of orthodoxy and vested interests—are surely known to him. What can he do but seek safety in the verbal veneration for Veda? Only his rationalist conscience is evidently too strong to allow him not to hint at the same time that this veneration is to be taken as a matter of formality, i.e. without any philosophical significance.

50. Vatsyayana on *NS* iv.1.59.

12. Amalgam of Science and Superstition

Significantly, while feigning reverence for the scriptural authority of Veda, both Gotama and Kanada—the founders of the Nyaya-Vaisesika—take special care to remain fully aloof from the philosophical ideas actually contained in Veda, i.e. in its genuinely philosophical parts or the Upanisads. Their professed veneration for Veda remains peculiarly restricted to the non-philosophical features of Vedic orthodoxy, or more specifically to the priest-class privileges and other sundry superstitions which the law-givers in particular want us to accept as the essence of Vedic piety. But they remain completely silent about the Upanisadic speculations—indisputably the real philosophical content of Veda.

Thus, in the first two parts of the sixth chapter of *Vaisesika-sutra,* Kanada wants to go into some details of what he means by *dharma* or religious merit in the orthodox sense. What he actually discusses in these are, however, such commonplace prescriptions of the law-givers as the virtue of feeding the Brahmins, offering gifts to them, observing food-taboos of the *dharmasastra*-s etc.—i.e. topics that fully satisfy the social and economic privileges of the priest-class, without in any way being directly involved in the philosophical views expressed in Veda. It is not difficult to understand his complete silence over Vedic philosophy in its actual sense. His own philosophical view does not agree with this. But what can possibly be the relevance of his discussion of the merit of feeding the Brahmin and such other topics for the essentially empirical understanding of nature, its constitution and laws, which Kanada basically strives after? Kanada himself does not answer the question. But it is not difficult for us to guess what it is. It is necessary to save his science against its possible persecution by the law-givers and other spokesmen of the vested interests and the simplest way of doing this is to give it the stamp of the officially approved superstitions.

Gotama adopts a similar technique. He exhibits his veneration for Veda with reference to not even a scrap of philosophical view actually embodied in it but strictly with reference to the alleged efficacy of a stray Vedic ritual—that of obtaining a son. We have just seen how much of intrinsic efficacy even such a ritual is left with in Gotama's mock-serious defence. One obtains a son by performing the ritual only when all the empirically known physical conditions of procreation are fully satisfied. If a son is not born in spite of the performance of the ritual, the reason is either male sterility or female disease or perverse coition. This is surely not the way of defending the intrinsic efficacy of Vedic ritual according to the canons of logic that Gotama himself works out. But this is enough to save his rationalism from possible persecution. The author of the first systematic work on Indian logic apparently knows that the priest-class feels secure of its social and economic interests with some tall generalised talk of the importance of Vedic rituals and it is not likely to bother about any subtle hint added to the discussion by the logician to save his rationalist conscience. Logic is thus saved by allowing it to be baptised into Vedic faith.

The almost complete silence of Kanada and Gotama over Vedic philosophical ideas is bound to appear as extremely strange because of two main reasons. First, both of them are philosophers above all. Secondly, Veda does contain the pronouncedly philosophical portions called the Upanisads. Therefore, the philosophers' admiration for Veda—if genuine—is supposed to be basically the admiration for the philosophical thoughts of Veda. But the fact is that the veneration for Veda professed by Kanada and Gotama does not in the least take note of the real Vedic philosophy—the philosophy, for example, so loudly proclaimed by Yajnavalkya and others in the Upanisads. Since it is inconceivable that they are unaware of the Upanisads, the only conceivable reason for their total silence about Upanisadic philosophy is that they are fully aware that this philosophy goes against what they them-

selves work out and defend. At the same time, since it is dangerous to be branded as heretics, they feel the need to placate Vedic orthodoxy, though with veneration for the strictly non-philosophical aspects of it.

Such then is the stand of the actual founders of Nyaya-Vaisesika. They give their philosophy the somewhat strange appearance of an amalgam of science and superstition evidently for the purpose of evading censorship. What the Indian philosophical tradition gains from this compromise is not to be overlooked. In the political atmosphere created by the law-givers and other spokesmen of the vested interests, it is difficult to imagine logic and atomism gaining any place for itself in the officially accepted philosophy without at least pretending to be sufficiently pious.

At the same time, there is an obvious risk in adopting such a technique of evading inquisition. It is the risk of the element of superstition gradually assuming an importance of its own and of eventually appearing as an integral part of the philosophy. The scriptural authority of Veda, once admitted, is likely to make an ever-more pressing demand for itself from the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas. It may even become a part of their own makebelieve.

The presumption is that this actually takes place. Most of the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas give us the impression of being as serious about the theology grafted on their philosophy as about its secular and scientific content. The result is a growing internal inconsistency of Nyaya-Vaisesika as a philosophy. The situation ultimately becomes so absurd that a predominantly theological treatise say on the proofs for the existence of God or on the soul and its salvation wants to be passed as genuine an exposition of the Nyaya-Vaisesika as a purely empirical study of nature or of atomism.

The process of this transformation of the Nyaya-Vaisesika forms the subject of an independent study. We have the scope here to mention only a few examples.

In the earlier days of Kanada and Gotama, even a cer-

tain stray expression of the veneration for Veda and Vedic rituals is perhaps enough to placate orthodoxy. It seems however that with the sharpening of the clash of philosophical ideas, the need is felt for concessions to the dominant philosophical trend of the Upanisads to meet the same purpose. In any case, we find Vatsyayana[51] making such concessions, howsoever inconsistent these may be with his otherwise bold defence of rationalism. Here are a few examples.

Upanisadic philosophy in its most dominant form is the philosophy of the pure soul, the knowledge of which is supposed to mean salvation. The Indian word for it is *adhyatma-vidya*—the philosophy of soul and its salvation. In the opening sentence of *Nyaya-sutra* Gotama apparently takes no note of it. Defining the scope of the Nyaya philosophy, he mentions only sixteen categories—mostly epistemological and proto-epistemological (i.e. concerning the technique of debate)—and adds that the knowledge of these is conducive to the highest good. How to bring this in conformity with Upanisadic philosophy? Vatsyayana[52] suggests:

For the benefit of mankind four branches of study—each having its unique subject-matter—are prescribed, of which this study of logic is the fourth and its unique subject-matter consists of these categories, namely 'doubt' (*samsaya*) etc. Without the separate mention of these, it (logic) would have been mere 'philosophy of the soul' (*adhyatma-vidya*), like Upanisad. Therefore, by mentioning the categories like 'doubt' etc. it is shown to have its unique subject-matter.

51. For the history of Nyaya-Vaisesika, by far the most serious question is: Why do the Nyaya-Vaisesikas—from Vatsyayana onwards—try to effect such a strange and artificial compromise between their secular theme and obvious Brahminical theology? For the solution of this, an extensive survey of the nature and source of their livelihood seems to be necessary. It may be that for this they are placed in the typical position of Brahmins in society and hence, in spite of their science, have to compromise with the ideology of which the Brahmins are the custodians.

52. Vatsyayana on *NS* i.1.1. Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya NP i.9.

What does this mean? It means that as 'philosophy of soul' there is no difference between Nyaya and Upanisad. Still Nyaya or logic has its distinctive peculiarity, because over and above being philosophy of soul, it discusses epistemological and proto-epistemological categories. But this hardly makes much sense either from the strict standpoint of the Upanisads or from that of Gotama's logic. We have already seen that one of the basic demands of the Upanisadic philosophy of soul is the condemnation of logic —of the normal instruments of right knowledge or *pramana*-s. Addition of logic can only be repugnant to it. Besides, if Gotama is really serious about the Upanisadic philosophy of the soul, it is hardly conceivable that he should begin his work with the enumeration of his sixteen categories and should end his work with the enumeration of the last of these, namely *nigrahasthana* or 'the point of defeat in a logical debate'. In short, *adhyatma-vidya* and logic do not go together. The Upanisads represent the former as unmistakably as Gotama's Nyaya stands for the latter. Vatsyayana wants to effect a compromise between the two. Where he actually lands however is some inconsistency.

Strangely enough Vatsyayana perseveres in his effort to graft on Nyaya the Upanisadic philosophy of pure soul and he even tries to smuggle into this philosophy the Upanisadic term *brahman*. We shall quote here two of his statements. Explaining the concept of deliverance from suffering or salvation, he observes,

> Such a state, when continued eternally, is known as liberation to those 'who have special knowledge of liberation' (*apavargavit*). It is the state of fearlessness, without decay and death; it is *brahman* and it is the attainment of the highest good.[53]

> And the people who know the true nature of *brahman* cite this (i.e. the state of dreamless sleep) as an instance (for explaining) the nature of the liberated self.[54]

53. Vatsyayana on *NS* i.1.22.

54. *Ib.* on iv.1.62.

Yet, as we shall later see[55], what a great difference exists between the Nyaya-Vaisesika view of many selves and the Upanisadic conception of a purely non-dual one: while in the former consciousness is an accidental quality generated in a self because of its conjunction with various other physical factors, in the Upanisadic view consciousness constitutes the essence of *the* self. Vatsyayana's zeal to read the same view of self in Nyaya and Upanisad—and therefore also the same conception of liberation in the two—represents at best a pious hope.

Equally pious is his tendency to modify the very concept of logic in favour of the Vedantic one. Let us first note how he puts it[56]:

What then is this *nyaya*? *Nyaya* is the examination of an object with the help of the instruments of valid knowledge (*pramana*-s). The inference (*anumana*) which is not contradicted by perception and scripture (*agama*) is called *anviksa*, that is knowing over again (*anu*, literally 'after') of that which is already known (*iksita*) by perception and scripture. This branch of knowledge is called *anviksiki* or *nyaya-vidya* or *nyaya-sastra*, because it is propagated for the discussion of that (viz *anviksa*). The inference which is contradicted by either perception or scripture is pseudo-*nyaya*.

What are the implications of this?

That, in Gotama's view, logic should be primarily concerned with inference does not perhaps need much discussion. But his understanding of inference—which goes by the name *anumana* or *anviksa* in Indian philosophy—needs some explanation. *Anumana* literally means 'after-knowledge'. It is so called because Gotama defines it as 'preceded by perception'.[57] According to Gotama—inference depends upon or is preceded by the perception of the relation between the probans and the probandum as well as the perception of the probans. Thus the inference of fire from smoke is preceded by (1) the previous perception of

55. See *infra* Ch. 8, Sec. 2.
56. Vatsyayana on *NS* i.1.1.
57. Gotama *NS* i.1.5.

the relation of fire and smoke, say in the kitchen oven, and (2) the present perception of smoke, say in the distant hill where it is inferred. Inference thus depends on perception; there is no inference that does not presuppose some observation of fact. Gotama's view is accordingly understood as the one that attributes primacy to perception. Without perception, no instrument of right knowledge—not even inference—is possible. The Indian way of putting this is to characterise perception as *pramana-jyestha*—'the eldest of all the instruments of right knowledge'.

It is not difficult to see why in such a view an inference must not be contradicted by perception, i.e. genuine perception and not cases of apparent perception which are really illusory. As instrument of right knowledge, perception is "stronger" than inference and the general norm is that no *pramana* can flout a comparatively stronger one. Hence an inference flouting direct experience is fallacious. One cannot infer, for example, that fire is cold, because it is contradicted by perception. But this must not be misunderstood. It does not mean that the range of perception is fixed once for all. Nor does it mean that our knowledge can never transcend the limits of the barely perceptual, that inferential knowledge is nothing but knowing over again what is already known by perception. Such a position is farthest from that of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas. We shall later see that while proving the reality of the atoms by inference they show how matter can exist in a form too fine to be known by direct perception. As a matter of fact, Gotama's logic gains for Indian philosophy the significant position that 'we can overcome the limitations of our sensuous apprehension and discover, by a process of inference based on observation, truths we cannot directly perceive'.

However, while explaining Gotama's position, Vatsyayana shows a clear anxiety to come to a compromise with theology. This he hopes to effect by a simple device. It is by adding the word *agama* or scripture to perception. Thus, *anumana* or inference remains essentially a form of 'after-

knowledge', i.e. a form of knowledge being preceded by some other knowledge. But while Gotama views this other knowledge to be nothing but perception, Vatsyayana wants us to understand inference as an 'after-knowledge' in the sense of being 'preceded by either perception or scripture'. Accordingly, perception no longer remains 'the eldest of the instruments of valid knowledge'. Scripture becomes as inviolable as perception. Hence, argues Vatsyayana, inference must not be contradicted either by perception or by scripture. An inference going against perception is fallacious no doubt. But so also is an inference going against scripture. In the later Nyaya-Vaisesika tradition all this becomes firmly fixed. The fallacy of being contradicted by scripture is as freely talked of as the fallacy of being contradicted by perception, though there is really nothing in Gotama's work to justify this.

Vatsyayana's compromise with theology may at first appear to be a cursory concession to scriptural authority. But its actual consequences are more devastating. It wants to undermine the basic function of logic. Scriptural knowledge, once admitted to be inviolable, leaves hardly any scope for the real advancement of knowledge. Logic is no longer viewed as an aid to overcome the limitations of the barely sensuous apprehension by the process of inference based on observation. Its function becomes, as Vatsyayana says in so many words, knowing over again what is already known by (perception or) scripture. If the function of logic is only to know what is already known, why should Gotama take the trouble of composing an elaborate treatise on it? Phanibhusana Tarkavagisa, one of the ablest of the recent Naiyayikas, answers, "Just as the knowledge of an object previously known by inference becomes sounder if konwn over again by perception or scripture, Similarly the knowledge already obtained by perception or scripture becomes sounder when proved anew by inference."[58] Apparently Phanibhusana knows that such a

8. See Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya NP i.13.

defence of the function of inference does not sound very convincing. So he passes on to comment that though the literal meaning of what Vatsyayana says is that inference is knowing over again what is already known, yet the point Vatsyayana actually wants to emphasise is a different one—that an inference, to be legitimate, must not be contradicted by perception or scripture.

We have just seen why from Gotama's point of view no valid inference can go against perception. We shall discuss here Vatsyayana's addition to it, namely that inference must not be in conflict with scripture. What is the implication of this? Basically, the implication is that reason must remain subservient to revelation, that logic must follow the footsteps of scripture, that arguments must never come in conflict with religious faith. But there is nothing new about such a position. It is the well-known position of the extreme idealists like Samkara and his followers. And it is also the only position sanctioned by the law-givers like Manu and others.

These extreme idealists and law-givers are, however, the sworn enemies of logic. They want to cripple it under the load of scriptural faith. Vatsyayana's amendment of Gotama's position thus amounts to a surrender to the enemies of logic. It is therefore a misfortune for the later Nyaya-Vaisesika tradition that this amendment of Vatsyayana becomes peculiarly firm. To the later exponents of this philosophy it becomes an accepted principle that no inference—no argument—must be in conflict with scripture. An inference contradicted by scripture must be fallacious.

But it is not difficult to see how from the Nyaya-Vaisesika viewpoint itself such a principle is really absurd. For the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, scripture means Veda. Hence the principle amounts to the assertion that no philosophical view can be acceptable if it goes against any statement contained in Veda. Yet the fact is that it is not at all difficult to amass a large number of quotations from Veda—particularly from the Upanisads—plainly in con-

tradiction with the fundamentals of the Nyaya-Vaisesika, particularly its logic and atomism. The point is quite simple. The dominant trend of Upanisadic philosophy is the extreme idealism of Yajnavalkya and others, while the Nyaya-Vaisesika is nothing if not a complete rejection of idealism.

But, it will be argued, the interpretation of a scriptural text is not an easy matter and what often appears to be its plain meaning is not necessarily so. The later Nyaya-Vaisesikas may as well claim that the apparent meaning of some scriptural declarations contradicts the fundamentals of their philosophy, though rightly understood even such scriptural declarations may be in full conformity with their philosophy.

That a lot of ingenuity is shown by Indian philosophers in interpreting the scriptural texts[59] need not be doubted. Particularly because of the interference of the law-givers with philosophical matters, the demand of Vedic orthodoxy becomes so oppressive that some of the philosophers are often compelled to show their affiliation to Veda with all sorts of forced interpretation of Vedic passages. This aspect of the Indian philosophical tradition is in fact the least important for us. However, in view of the tremendous importance of the Nyaya-Vaisesika for the scientific trend in Indian philosophy, we may try to have here some idea of how much damage is done to this philosophy by this tendency to gain the recognition of Vedic orthodoxy.

The greatest of the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas is Udayana of the tenth century. By his time the Vedic orthodoxy of the philosophy becomes so strong a part of the makebelieve of these philosophers that Udayana goes to the extent of showing an actual Vedic passage sanctioning the view of the atoms. Yet the way in which he does this shows the total bankruptcy of the tendency.

59. They sometimes go to the extent of talking of *anumiti-sruti*, i.e. scriptural passages not actually found but which are to be inferred as once existing.

How does Udayana try to substantiate his claim?

In *Svetasvatara Upanisad* is found a verse beginning with the expression *visvatascaksuruta*. In this verse occurs the word *patatra*. Udayana argues that this word *patatra* is the Vedic word for the atom! Hence this verse is an evidence of scriptural sanction for atomism.

Let us examine this evidence in some detail. The verse under consideration is quoted in *Svetasvatara Upanisad* from *Rgveda*.[60] For its proper understanding therefore we should go back to its source. Sayana, the most orthodox Vedic commentator, interprets the verse to mean: "The one-god, whose eyes pervade all directions, whose mouth pervades all directions, whose arms and feet pervade all directions—he, after bringing heaven and earth into being, directs these with his arms and his moving feet." Thus, as a verse belonging to a very late stratum of *Rgveda*, it does foreshadow some form of rudimentary monotheism. It is only natural for the most theistic of the Upanisads—*Svetasvatara*—to quote it. But where are the atoms in the verse? Udayana says that these are referred to by the word *patatra* as occurring in it. But the word *patatra* ordinarily means the 'bird's wing' (lit. 'that which saves it from falling'), though in the particular context under discussion, Sayana prefers to interpret it as 'the moving feet' (*gamanasilaih padaih*). There is thus nothing in the plain meaning of the word to suggest the atom. Udayana's claim to read the atoms in it is based on a peculiar argument. Derived from the root *pat*, the word *patatra* implies movement and, since the atoms are moving, the word stands for the atoms. It is not difficult to see to what an absurdity this line of argument leads one to. The oldest glossary of Vedic words, *Nighantu*, mentions no less than one hundred and twentytwo words implying movement. In *Rgveda* alone, these words along with their derivatives occur thousands of times. Does this mean that the *Rgveda* is bursting with atomism?

60. *Rv* x.81.3 = *Sv. Up.* iii.3.

More on the scriptural sanction for atomism is unnecessary. But the fact that a philosopher of Udayana's stature wants to show it on the flimsiest ground is most bewildering. The makebelieve in Vedic orthodoxy of the Nyaya-Vaisesika becomes so strong in the later period that it leads even its greatest representative to an absurdity.

13. Paradox of Sectarianism

What we have just discussed cannot but raise a very interesting question. The hard core of the antithesis of idealism is represented by Lokayata, Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika. Of these, Lokayata apparently cares little for philosophical sophistication. At least we are not aware of any advanced philosopher defending it during the maturer period of Indian philosophical activity. The fate of Samkhya again is very peculiar. After what is called the Brahmanical reform of this philosophy, it is virtually transformed into some kind of Vedanta. We are aware of no important representative of Samkhya in the comparatively later period. Its contribution to the general fund of the Indian antithesis of idealism, as we shall later see, has to be reconstructed from what we can infer about its original emphasis from its later survivals and references to it in other sources. We are thus left mainly with the Nyaya-Vaisesikas as contesting idealism in the full philosophical sense in the later period.

But how can this be at all possible? Indian idealism has its perennial source in the most dominant trend of Upanisadic speculations, while, beginning with the days of Vatsyayana, there develops among the Nyaya-Vaisesikas a clear anxiety to come to a compromise with the Upanisadic philosophy and to look at the Upanisads—the ending parts of Veda—as containing the most inviolable authority. When the scriptural status of the Upanisads becomes part of a strong makebelieve of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, how can they at all work so earnestly for the refutation and rejection of the philosophy represented in

the Upanisads not only by persons like Yajnavalkya and Sanatkumara but also by gods like Indra and Prajapati? It may be that the fundamentals of the Nyaya-Vaisesika are, since their inception, in flat contradiction with philosophical idealism. But how do the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas, for whom Vedic orthodoxy apparently becomes a part of their makebelieve, stick to these fundamentals and work these out in the form of full rejection of idealism so openly proclaimed in the Upanisads?

The answer to this leads us to see one of the strangest things that takes place in the history of Indian philosophy. Though idealism has its origin in Vedic thought, the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas justify their zeal for its refutation largely in the name of a very strong sentiment for Vedic orthodoxy itself. This is an interesting example of the paradox of sectarianism in Indian philosophy. To understand this, we have to recall briefly the history of Indian idealism.

There is no doubt that idealism first emerges in Indian philosophy in the speculations of the Upanisads. For about five or six hundred years after this, however, it remains almost completely neglected in the history of Indian philosophy. In the early years of the Christian era, there appear the vast *Mahayana-sutra*-s in which the main threads of Upanisadic idealism are first taken up after the Upanisadic period. In this literature, however, idealism no longer appears as a characteristic Vedic philosophy. What *Mahayana-sutra*-s preach is supposed to be Buddhist thought. From the viewpoint of Vedic orthodoxy it is easily branded as heresy—as some kind of neo-Buddhism opposed to the Vedic view. After *Mahayana-sutra*-s, two important schools of philosophers—Madhyamaka and Yogacara—give to the same idealist outlook a much more advanced philosophical form. That as a matter of fact these philosophers draw heavily on the basic suggestions of the Upanisads is concealed by them in the interest of their own sectarianism. They claim with great zest that their philosophical view is nothing but the views of the Buddha, who, during his own lifetime finds it wise to conceal them but,

several centuries after his death, allows these to be propagated among the people. As a result of all this, the idealist philosophy—though originally preached by the Upanisadic philosophers—acquires in the course of time the appearance of Buddhist philosophy. Of course Gaudapada —and following him Samkara—restate the same idealist philosophy on the original authority of the Upanisads. But it is easy for the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas to conveniently overlook this continuity of Advaita Vedanta with Mahayana Buddhism. The philosophical position of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas demands that idealism be refuted in all seriousness; if their own makebelieve of Vedic orthodoxy prevents them to refute idealism under the banner of the Upanisads or Vedanta, they have all the justification of the same makebelieve to refute it under the banner of Buddhism. Moreover, their polemic against philosophical idealism receives the blessings of the representatives of Vedic orthodoxy, whose ecstasy to see the *Buddhists being vanquished* makes them easily forget how disastrous the same is for the philosophical views actually expressed by Upanisadic sages like Yajnavalkya and others.

14. Return to Rationalism and Science

In the next chapter we shall review in brief the Nyaya-Vaisesika refutation of philosophical idealism. We shall see how in the course of this the philosophy regains its self-identity—its original spirit of rationalism, secularism and science. The doctrinal modifications sought to be introduced into it by Vatsyayana and the other later Nyaya-Vaisesikas, namely that the philosophy is essentially the same as the Upanisadic view of the soul and its salvation (*adhyatma-vidya*), is for all practical purposes kept in abeyance. In the context of the rejection of idealism, the Nyaya-Vaisesika is above all a theory of the atoms, discussing on mainly empirical grounds the problem of the divisibility of matter and its limit. The evidences of dream and illusion which from the Upanisadic age are advanced

as proofs for philosophical idealism are literally torn to pieces by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas in the course of their rejection of idealism. They try to work out an essentially scientific understanding of the same phenomena—i.e. as scientific as their stock of empirical data permits them to do. Again, as if forgetting for the time being everything about the inviolable authority of the scriptures—the view that reason is illegitimate in so far as it does not strictly conform to revelation—these philosophers make the stubborn defence of rationalism the very basis of their refutation of idealism.

We shall later see the details of all these. For the present, let us note only one interesting point.

In the history of Indian philosophy sectarianism plays a very peculiar and complex role. It makes the philosophers more interested in the prestige of their sects. Generally speaking this creates an atmosphere of dogmatism, the kind of which is not found in the philosophical history elsewhere. Non-philosophical considerations are freely allowed to be mixed with genuine philosophical ones, often giving us today a very strange and even quaint impression. At the same time, this sectarianism has also an inner contradiction of its own. The most striking of this is the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy. The makebelieve of Vedic orthodoxy of the later followers of this philosophy leads them to imitate and come to a compromise with a number of positions characteristic of philosophical idealism, i.e. in so far as these are historically expressed as features of Vedic (Upanisadic) outlook. Only the intense sectarian animosity for the Buddhists enables the same philosophers to outgrow and discard the same philosophical positions, because the Mahayana Buddhists want to give these the stamp of Buddhism.

15. Theories of the Nature of Matter

Since the Nyaya-Vaisesika as it comes down to us often appears as a strange amalgam of science and supersti-

tion, we felt the need of the above clarifications to discriminate between what is intrinsic and what is extrinsic to it. Intrinsically, it belongs to the tradition of rationalism, secularism and science, though because of certain extrinsic factors—the pretence to Vedic orthodoxy originally to evade censorship though eventually perhaps also as a makebelieve—it represents some kind of artificial compromise with idealism. For understanding the antithesis of idealism there is no reason to attach to the latter aspect of the philosophy more importance than it deserves. Ignoring it for the present, we may concentrate mainly on its former aspect. When we do this we can see why, along with Samkhya and Lokayata, it constitutes the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism.

Let us try to analyse the philosophical significance of this a little more fully.

That these three philosophies stand for the rejection of idealism is quite on the surface. This means that as against the persistent tendency of Indian idealists to deny the reality of the external world, Lokayata, Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika defend its reality. But this is not all that unites the three philosophies. What unites them further is another important point. All the three philosophies also want to work out *an explanation of the objective world in terms of their respective theories of the nature of matter.* This is about the most important feature that gives positive significance to the concept of the antithesis of Indian idealism. It is not the mere negation of the denial of the objective world; it is moreover the positive assertion that this objective world is made of matter, though matter as conceived in these three philosophies is not the same. The Lokayatas conceive matter as the *bhuta*-s or physical elements—earth, water, air and fire. Hence their view is called *bhuta-vada* or the theory of the physical elements. The Samkhyas conceive matter as *pradhana*, i.e. primeval subtle matter from which evolves everything in the world. Hence their view is called *pradhana-vada* or the doctrine of *pradhana*. The Nyaya-Vaisesikas conceive matter as

atoms or *paramanu*-s. Hence their view is known as *paramanu-vada* or the theory of the atoms. As theories of the nature of matter these three are not the same, nor is there any ground to imagine that the mystery of matter is exhausted by any of these.[61] But that is a different point altogether. What is important is to note that notwithstanding the differences between these three theories, they represent three Indian attempts to understand the nature of matter. And it is in terms of these that the three philosophies want to explain the basic constitution of the external or objective world, the reality of which they defend against the idealists.

This point is of crucial significance for understanding the Indian antithesis of philosophical idealism, or more

61. In this connection it is necessary to remember the distinction between 'matter' as an epistemological category and 'the theories of the nature of matter'. Overlooking this distinction, certain recent philosophers argue that the latest discoveries of the sciences result in the elimination of matter. Against them Lenin observes: ' "Matter disappears" means that the limit within which we have hitherto known matter disappears and that our knowledge is penetrating deeper; properties of matter are likewise disappearing which formerly seemed absolute, immutable, and primary (impenetrability, inertia, mass, etc) and which are now revealed to be relative and characteristic only of certain states of matter. For the *sole* "property" of matter with whose recognition philosophical materialism is bound up is the property of *being an objective reality*, of existing outside the mind... In order to present the question in the only correct way, i.e. from the dialectical materialist standpoint, we must ask: Do electrons, ether *and so on* exist as objective realities outside the human mind or not? The scientists will also have to answer this question unhesitatingly; and they do invariably answer it in the *affirmative*, just as they unhesitatingly recognise that nature existed prior to man and prior to organic matter. Thus, the question is decided in favour of materialism, for the concept matter, as we already stated, epistemologically implies nothing but objective reality existing independently of the human mind and reflected by it... It is mainly because the physicists did not know dialectics that the new physics strayed into idealism. They combated metaphysical (in Engels', and not the positivist, i.e. Humean, sense of the word) materialism and its onesided "mechanism" and in so doing threw out the baby with the bath-water. Denying the immutability of the elements and of the properties of matter known

strictly its hard core. In Indian terminology, it is not mere *bahyartha-vada* or the view of the extra-mentality or externality of the world known. It is *bahyartha-vada* as further characterised by positive commitment to either *bhuta-vada* or *pradhana-vada* or *paramanu-vada*—a commitment in all these three forms converging on the basic claim that matter is the ultimate constituent of the world.

16. Realism or Materialism?

With these preliminaries over, we may now pass on to consider another question. How far are we philosophically justified to consider this antithesis of idealism—or, more strictly, its hard core—as basically materialist? The question is crucial. Assuming the answer to be in the affirmative, we are led to look at the basic struggle in traditional

hitherto, they ended by denying matter, i.e. the objective reality of the physical world. Denying the absolute character of some of the most important and basic laws, they ended by denying all objective law in nature and by declaring that a law of nature is a mere convention, "a limitation of expectation", "a logical necessity", and so forth. Insisting on the approximate and relative character of our knowledge, they ended by denying the object independent of the mind, reflected approximately-correctly and relatively-truthfully by the mind. And so on and so forth, without end." Lenin MEC 248-50.

Again Lenin MEC 269-70: 'The destructibility of the atom, its inexhaustibility, the mutability of all forms of matter and of its motion, have always been the stronghold of dialectical materialism. All boundaries in nature are conditional, relative, movable, and express the gradual approximation of our mind towards knowledge of matter. But this does not in any way prove that nature, matter itself, is a symbol, a conventional sign, i.e. the product of our mind. The electron is to the atom as a full stop in this book is to the size of a building 200 feet long, 100 feet broad and 50 feet high (Lodge); it moves with a velocity as high as 270,000 kilometres per second; its mass is a function of its velocity; it makes 500 trillion revolutions in a second—all this is much more complicated than the old mechanics; but it is, nevertheless, movement of matter in space and time. Human reason has discovered many amazing things in nature and will discover still more, and will thereby increase its power over nature. But this does not mean that nature is the creation of our mind or of abstract mind, i.e. of Ward's God, Bogdanov's "substitution" etc.'

Indian philosophy as the struggle between the idealist and materialist trends. But is the answer in the affirmative?

To most of the modern interpreters of traditional Indian philosophy the very possibility of this will appear to be grotesque. Not that they deny any materialist trend in Indian philosophy. What they argue, however, is that it is to be kept completely segregated in the Indian philosophical tradition. It is usually assumed that materialism in Indian philosophy is confined only to the Lokayatas or Carvakas, who form at best an insignificant minority of our philosophers and whose philosophical calibre is somewhat questionable.

It is admitted no doubt that a large number of others reject idealism and that among them are some of our most eminent philosophers. But such an opposition to idealism is one thing and the acceptance of materialism something else altogether. Since these other philosophers are opposed to idealism, it does not follow that they have anything to do with materialism. Therefore, as contrasted with the opposition to idealism of the Lokayatas, the opposition to idealism of others is best understood by some term other than materialism. What then is this term?

To most of the modern writers on Indian philosophy, this other term is realism. Thus they freely talk of Samkhya realism and Nyaya-Vaisesika realism, reserving the term materialism only for the Lokayatas. The term realism is thus accepted, because while expressing full opposition to idealism, it is supposed to show no preference for materialism. Besides, from the standpoint of the antimaterialist sentiments, the term realism is also innocuous, for it is free from all the vices and vulgarities usually ascribed to the materialists.

Such is the usual way of looking at the Indian philosophical tradition. Since it is to a large extent a matter concerning the use of right terminology, let us first try to be clear about the terminological question. Is there really any ground to think that the term realism—and not material-

ism—is specifically appropriate for the Indian antithesis of idealism or, more particularly, for its hard core?

The answer obviously depends on the exact connotation of these terms. This, however, cannot be arbitrarily settled. The actual connotation of these terms is to be accepted from the context of their original use, i.e. the context of the history of European philosophy, from which they are taken for expressing equivalent positions in Indian philosophy. Thus, unless we are permitted to infuse some new meaning into the term realism as contrasted to materialism, its use must be restricted to convey the exact sense in which it is used by those European philosophers who are primarily responsible for its vogue in modern philosophy. Who are these philosophers, and what is the characteristic peculiarity of the philosophical position which is supposed to be conveyed by the term realism and realism alone?

In the history of European philosophy, the term realism is not a new one. It is already current among the medieval philosophers, known as the Scholastics. But the sense in which they use it is now obsolete. Far from conveying any opposition to idealism, realism—as contrasted with nominalism—actually means for them the most dominant form of ancient idealism, namely Plato's doctrine of the universals or Ideas. While the nominalists argue that such universals are mere names, the medieval realists claim that the immaterial substances called the universals possess much more reality than physical things.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Thomas Reid proposes to use the term realism in its new sense of being an antithesis of idealism. As against the idealism of Berkeley in particular he wants to defend the common-sense view that the objects known exist outside the mind and independently of the mind.

But Reid does not meet with a great deal of immediate success. The immense popularity of the term realism in European philosophy actually begins with the publication of two papers, in 1899 and 1903, by G. E. Moore, of which

one bears the title *Refutation of Idealism.* Realism, as an antithesis of idealism, is thus primarily a twentieth century innovation and its great popularity in recent times is due to the fact that a considerable number of philosophers, mainly British and American, use it to express their ostensible disapproval of idealism, particularly of the theory of knowledge from which Berkeley's idealism wants to draw its sanction. The main point of the realists is that objects exist independently of the act of knowing and that it is wrong to imagine that consciousness imparts being or reality to the objects of which we are conscious.

There is no doubt that the recent realists try hard to expose the fallacious ground on which idealism is based. However, what interests us is a different question. If these philosophers are genuinely against idealism, what is it that prevents them from accepting the older term for the antithesis of idealism? After all philosophical idealism is rejected by many European philosophers beginning from the ancient period, and the minimum precondition for this rejection is the recognition of the extra-mental or objective reality of the things known. From Democritus to Feuerbach and Marx, idealism is rejected. But these philosophers rejecting idealism prefer to be known as materialists, and their philosophical positions are known as different brands of materialism. But what is it that leads the modern realists to claim that their own opposition to idealism is better referred to as realism and not materialism? The answer is that these philosophers are in fact no less opposed to materialism than to idealism.

In so far as they are keen on proving that the objects known exist independently of the knowing mind, their opposition to idealism can be easily understood. But what accounts for their refusal to accept the term materialism? Is it simply because of some deep-rooted prejudice against the term materialism? The possibility of such a prejudice cannot be discarded. For modern realists, however, there is also a philosophical ground for the refusal to be called materialists.

As against the idealists, they no doubt argue that the objects known exist independently of the circumstance of being known. As against the materialists, however, they have their own reservations. Philosophically speaking, the main point of this reservation is that while the materialists maintain that these objects are essentially material—that the fundamental stuff that constitutes them is best referred to by the term matter—the recent realists are strongly opposed to any such possibility.

What, according to them, is positively the nature of the objects known? This is about the most difficult question concerning the philosophical position of the modern realists, for they differ most widely among themselves on this point. Hence it is usually said that what unites the realists is something essentially negative; it is their common antipathy to idealism. This is true, but that is not the whole truth. What actually unites them all is also their common antipathy to materialism. In other words their negativism is actually a dual one—the rejection of idealism as well as materialism. And their rejection of materialism is perhaps best understood as their tendency to eliminate the concept of matter from philosophy. Thus, according to a very influential section of them the fundamental stuff that constitutes the objects known is best understood by some neutral term like the 'element', which is supposed to be neither mind nor matter.

What is meant by such a term is a different question. That which particularly concerns the modern materialists, however, is that the apathy to materialism often leads the representatives of recent realism to succumb to the same idealist position, the rejection of which forms the starting point of their own philosophical enthusiasm.

It is not necessary for our purpose to go into the details of all these. In his *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, Lenin shows how the positivists and other recent realists, with all their apparent distaste for idealism, succumb to idealism itself. In exposing this, Lenin, from the standpoint of

consistent materialism, wants also to reject the dubious term realism as expressing the real antithesis of philosophical idealism. Referring to the most popular trend of philosophical writings of his times, he observes,[62]

Let us note that the term realism is here employed as the antithesis of idealism. Following Engels, I use *only* the term materialism in this sense, and consider it the sole correct terminology, specially since the term 'realism' has been bedraggled by the positivists and the other muddleheads who oscillate between materialism and idealism.

We may now return to our main question. Since, in the history of European philosophy, two different terms—realism and materialism—are actually used to refer to the antithesis of idealism, which of these two is the right equivalent for expressing the characteristic peculiarity of the hard core of the Indian antithesis of idealism? As we are supposed to answer this not by inventing any new meaning of terms, it is logical for our purpose to be first clear about the exact philosophical difference between the two. And, as we have just seen, the main point of this difference is that, as against materialism, realism is characterised by the tendency to eliminate matter, i.e. the refusal to admit that external objects known by us are essentially material in constitution. Therefore it is legitimate to use the term realism for the antithesis of idealism only when this antithesis also dissociates itself with the tendency to explain the constitution of the external world as being essentially material. When however this antithesis is further characterised by the tendency to explain the constitution of the external world as being essentially material, we are not permitted to use the term realism, the appropriate European equivalent being nothing but the older term materialism.

But let us ask ourselves another simple question. How are we to determine whether a philosopher is serious or not about viewing external objects as being basically material? Obviously the criterion is the philosopher's tendency

62. Lenin MEC 47.

to evolve—or at least to stick to—some theory of the nature of matter, for such a theory can have the only purpose of explaining the constitution of the objects known.

In the Indian context, therefore, the hard core of the antithesis of idealism is to be called realism instead of materialism, *only if it is found to dissociate itself from any theory of the nature of matter.* If, on the contrary, it is also positively committed to some theory of the nature of matter, realism will not be the right European equivalent for referring to it: the only appropriate term will be materialism.

We have seen that three philosophical views—the Lokayata, Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika—form this hard core. Our present question, therefore, is: Do these philosophies stand for the mere rejection of idealism without any commitment to the theory of the nature of matter, or are these also positively committed to some theory of the nature of matter? We have just seen the answer to this.

The hard core of the Indian antithesis of philosophical idealism is characterised not merely by the rejection of idealism but also by the positive commitment to some theory of the nature of matter. It is not merely *bahyartha-vada* or the view that the objects known exist outside the mind, but this *bahyartha-vada* as further committed to either *bhuta-vada* or *pradhana-vada* or *paramanu-vada.* Therefore among the European terminologies for the antithesis of idealism—realism and materialism—the former is inappropriate for it. What is appropriate is the latter.

17. Materialism : Ancient and Modern

But, it will be argued, materialism is not merely a philosophy that accepts the reality of matter, it is moreover the view according to which matter is primary and consciousness secondary—the view that consciousness is ultimately the product of matter. Among the philosophies that go to the making of the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism, Lokayata takes such a view. But what about

Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika? We shall return to this question in a later chapter[63] and shall see that contrary to many a misconception about Indian philosophy, their view of consciousness is remarkably near that of Lokayata.

The other clarification necessary for understanding the materialist tradition in Indian philosophy is that we must not allow ourselves to be misled to overlook the essential materialism of a philosophy because of certain extraneous or non-philosophical factors with which it may remain historically associated, particularly in the earlier forms of the expressions of the materialist trend. There is no doubt that to the extent such extraneous factors actually go against the spirit of science, these are indicative of weakness of the earlier materialists. Materialism acquires philosophical significance in so far as it outgrows this weakness. The modern materialists, therefore, insist on a critical rejection of all such factors. At the same time they insist that we must not allow ourselves to be carried away by the evidence of such factors to the extent of overlooking what is nevertheless positively materialist in the contributions of earlier materialists.

For the purpose of determining whether an early philosophical view is basically materialist or not, let us not set up a criterion harder than the one used by the foremost materialists of the modern world, Marx and Engels. Let us see, for example, how they assess the philosophy of Francis Bacon, whose materialism they so much admire, but the glaring inconsistencies of some of whose other ideas with this materialism they also severely criticise. Observes Marx:[64]

The real founder of English materialism and all modern experimental science was Bacon. For him natural science was the true science and physics based on perception was the most excellent part of natural science... In Bacon, its first creator, materialism contained latent and still in a naive way the germs of all round development. Matter

63. See *infra* Ch. 8, Sec. 2-3. 64. Marx & Engels HF 172.

smiled at man with poetical sensuous brightness. The aphoristic doctrine itself, on the other hand, was full of the inconsistencies of theology.

Engels, fully subscribing to this, goes into some details to show to what a ridiculous extent Bacon's inconsistencies lead him:[65]

The dialectics that has found its way into popular consciousness is expressed in the old saying that extremes meet. In accordance with this we should hardly err in looking for the most extreme degree of fantasy, credulity and superstition, not in that trend of natural science which, like the German philosophy of nature, tries to force the objective world into the framework of its subjective thought, but rather in the opposite trend, which, exalting mere experience, treats thought with sovereign disdain, and really has gone to the furthest extreme in emptiness of thought. This school prevails in England. Its father, the much lauded Francis Bacon, already advanced the demand that his new empirical, inductive method should be pursued to attain, above all, by its means: longer life, rejuvenation—to a certain extent, alteration of stature and features, transformation of one body into another, the production of new species, power over the air and the production of storms. He complains that such investigations have been abandoned, and in his natural history he gives definite recipes for making gold and performing various miracles. Similarly Isaac Newton in his old age greatly busied himself with expounding the Revelation of St. John.

Are we then to look at Bacon as a materialist? From the standpoint of the most advanced materialists themselves, the answer is surely in the affirmative. But can we look at him as a fully consistent materialist? From the same standpoint, again, the answer is as surely in the negative, for a whole host of ideas actually repugnant to the real spirit of materialism remains in his philosophy.

All these are important for the right understanding of the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism. In the writings of the philosophers that represent this hard core, we sometimes come across ideas and attitudes that prove today to be quite repugnant to the real spirit of modern

65. Engels DN 51.

science and modern materialism. Being ancient and medieval philosophers, they often take for granted many ideas and beliefs that form part of commonsense of those days, but which by the standard of modern knowledge are mere credulities. Only the Lokayatas, in spite of belonging to a very early period, emancipate themselves from the spell of such beliefs. From the point of view of being free from sundry superstitions, they are undoubtedly most remarkable among the Indian materialists. At the same time the actual philosophical contributions to materialism on the part of some others are much more significant than that of the Lokayatas, in spite of the fact that they are comparatively less free from the superstitions of their age. This is particularly true of the representatives of Indian logic and atomism.

For all that we know of the Lokayatas, they never care to develop any sound logical apparatus to counteract the highly sophisticated defence of idealism in Indian philosophy. The conclusions of the idealists themselves are indicative of an ideological perversion no doubt. Still the fact remains that while moving towards these conclusions, they are the first to show the awareness of certain momentous theoretical problems, without the discussion of which the Indian philosophical heritage as such would have remained at a naive and rudimentary stage. Such, for example, are the problems of the validity of reason and experience, of the nature and object of knowledge, of the criterion of truth, of the significance of dream and illusion, of the meaning of causality, of the legitimacy of the concept of matter, and so on. We have no evidence to assert that the Lokayatas ever discussed such problems or even adequately understood their significance for philosophy. Instead of any serious theoretical discussion of these, they seem to rely more on sound commonsense satire directed against the priest-class privileges and the myths from which they draw their sanction. Not that the significance of such satire is in any way to be undermined. Still this is evidently not enough for the full philosophical

emancipation from the spell of idealism—the most important precondition for moving towards the materialist alternative. This task of answering the vital philosophical questions raised by the idealists—inclusive of the task of the theoretical refutation of the main arguments of the idealists—is taken up by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, though in its actual execution they receive a great deal of support from some other philosophers belonging to the fringe of the antithesis of Indian idealism. Besides the Lokayatas have only a rudimentary theory of the nature of matter, with which they cannot attempt any explanation of the vast complex of natural phenomena. By contrast, as a theory of the nature of matter, atomism is immensely superior, and it enables the Nyaya-Vaisesikas to explain a surprisingly wide range of natural phenomena, which is another excellence of their materialism. Therefore, without underestimating the contributions of the Lokayatas to the materialist tradition of Indian philosophy, we have to admit that the contributions by the Indian atomists are theoretically sounder. What usually prevents modern scholars from seeing this is a body of sundry superstitions that remains loosely associated with the Nyaya-Vaisesika, i.e. without forming any vital aspect of this philosophy and without having any genuine philosophical significance. We have discussed the possible source of these.

All this does not mean that the theoretical significance of Indian atomism—or, for that matter, of the materialist tradition of Indian philosophy—is in any way to be exaggerated. As we shall later see, there are many limitations of this materialist tradition and, judged by contemporary standard, some of them are extremely severe. These limitations are perhaps historically inevitable in the context of the comparatively underdeveloped science and sociology to which the materialist tradition in Indian philosophy actually belongs. Therefore, while nourishing this tradition for our present philosophical requirements, we have to enrich it with contemporary experience, and thus raise it to a new and higher level.

Chapter 7

REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

1. Preliminary Remarks

In the previous chapter is given a list of the more outstanding Indian philosophers who refute and reject idealism. The refutation of idealism forming as it does an important subject for such a large number of philosophers, the accumulated bulk of their writings on it is quite considerable. These writings are often highly technical, for the Indian philosophers have a sophisticated norm of philosophical debate, which the opponents of idealism as well as the idealists are obliged to follow. A literal rendering of the cryptic form in which they usually put their arguments is sometimes impossible. Even when it is possible, it may not make much sense outside the rather restricted circle of specialists. But the full explanation of the arguments in simpler language requires more space than is allowed by the scope of the present work.

An adequate discussion of the refutation of idealism in Indian philosophy can be attempted only in an independent study. This is so, not merely because of the difficulties just mentioned. In their zeal the representatives of the antithesis of idealism evolve a large number of philosophical considerations—both major and minor—designed not only to refute the arguments of the idealists but also to prove that there are sound independent grounds for proving the objective reality of the material world. Further, a considerable number of collateral problems in Indian philosophy are intertwined as it were with the basic question of the reality of matter and the material world.

For obvious reasons it will not be possible in the present chapter to attempt any full review of the Indian philosophical literature on the refutation of idealism. What can be attempted is an account of some of the important considerations against idealism.

But how are we to begin?

In view of the complexity of the subject, it may not be a methodological error to follow one of the best models of the refutation of idealism in Indian philosophy. It is to be found in Gotama's *Nyaya-sutra.*

2. Defence of Experience & Reason

Gotama[1] opens his refutation of idealism with a defence of the *pramana*-s—the normal sources of knowledge like experience and reason. As we have seen, Indian idealism, since its inception in the Upanisads, persistently draws its sanction from the condemnation of normal knowledge and the sources thereof. Hence it is only logical for Gotama to begin with a defence of the *pramana*-s.

Let us first be clear about one point. The defence of the *pramana*-s—primarily of experience and reason—forms an extremely important theme for Gotama and Vatsyayana. Vatsyayana opens his commentary on the *Nyaya-sutra* with a general defence of the *pramana*-s. Gotama too devotes an entire section of his *Nyaya-sutra*[2] to this, besides of course arguing specifically in favour of each source of knowledge admitted by him. Thus they answer the more typical arguments of the idealists against the validity of the normal sources of knowledge.

In the present context they want to emphasise another point. It is the deep and irreconcilable contradiction in the idealists' attitude. On the one hand, driven by the inner needs of their system, they feel obliged to denounce normal knowledge, and hence all the sources thereof. On the other hand, as philosophers they have *to prove* their case, and

1. *NS* iv.2.26-37. 2. *Ib.* ii.1.8-22.

so are obliged to depend on the very knowledge and its recognised sources which they have otherwise rejected. In other words, for the idealist—as for everybody else—there is no alternative but to operate with the *pramana*-s and so also to assume their validity. If, therefore, his system demands that these *pramana*-s are to be condemned, there is something wrong with the system itself.

Such is the inner contradiction of Indian idealism, and to make it obvious, Vatsyayana introduces Gotama's refutation of idealism with a summary statement of the position of the idealist:

> You are ordinarily inclined to believe (argues the idealist) that all sorts of things really exist in the objective world, because you think that you actually know them, or that these things actually form the objects of your knowledge (*buddhi*). What you fail to note, however, is that this knowledge, on which you rely so much, is only a faculty of deception, or that it is sheer perverted knowledge—*mithya-buddhi*. Had this not been so—had your knowledge (*buddhi*) not been mere perverted knowledge (*mithya-buddhi*)—it could have as well proved the reality of the objects indicated by it. But the fact is that it cannot prove this. What it proves is the unreality of the objects known. In other words, your knowledge, on the strength of which you ordinarily imagine that the things known really exist in the external world, in fact proves their unreality or nonexistence.

There is no doubt that the position of the idealist, thus put, looks extraordinarily muddled. What precisely does he mean? His main point is that all forms of knowledge are false—that all experience and all reasoning are mere deceptions—because these are pointers to material things that do not exist. But how is it that at the same time he claims that this knowledge—this organ of deception—proves his main thesis, namely the unreality of the things of the material world? To put it more plainly: Does the idealist admit the validity of knowledge or not? Evidently he cannot both deny it and at the same time depend on it to prove his own case. That is like declaring a man bankrupt and wanting to borrow from him.

Indian idealism is thus infested with an irreconcilable inner contradiction. It is the contradiction of depending on the same knowledge which is condemned as sheer deception. The exposure of this forms the main theme of the first five aphorisms[3] of Gotama's refutation of idealism.

Of these five aphorisms, the first contains one of the favourite arguments with which the Indian idealists want to prove the unreality of external objects. Briefly put, the argument is as follows. Rightly 'scrutinised by knowledge' (*buddhya vivecanat*) the object alleged to exist in the external world turns out to be unreal or nonexisting, inasmuch as it is found that there is really no apprehension of it at all. Thus a man ordinarily believes that he knows a piece of cloth. The cloth as a really existing external thing is usually taken as an object of knowledge. By the 'scrutiny of knowledge', however, it is found that no real cloth can actually be apprehended, and hence the cloth is to be taken as nonexisting or unreal.

But why is it so? How does the scrutiny by knowledge show no apprehension of the cloth at all? Because, answers the idealist, this scrutiny only shows the individual threads, one by one, in none of which the cloth exists. Thus the cloth as cloth is never apprehended, and hence cannot be real. As Vatsyayana explains:

When all the threads are individually scrutinised by knowledge as 'this is a thread', 'this is a thread', and so on—there remains nothing to be apprehended which may be considered as the object of the knowledge of the cloth. Because there remains no apprehension of the real nature of the thing called cloth, this alleged knowledge of the cloth turns out to be a mere deceptive knowledge (*mithya-buddhi*). And so also are all the cases: in all the cases of alleged knowledge of external things, the knowledge turns out to be mere deception.

The last sentence means: the same process of scrutiny by knowledge carried to its culmination, leaves one with nothing external as actually apprehended and therefore

3. *Ib.* iv.2.26-30.

as real. Just as this scrutiny removes the cloth from the realm of reality leaving only the threads behind, so in the next step the threads leave only their fibres, which, again by a still further step leave only their parts behind—and so on, until nothing is left at all as actually apprehended and therefore entitled to be called a real thing.

What, then, is the cloth ordinarily supposed to correspond to our knowledge of it? To some of the Indian idealists, it is nothingness or mere void; to some others it is a bare subjective idea with a deceptive externality about it; to still others it is only an indescribable creation of pure ignorance. In spite of the seeming differences among them, all are agreed on one point: the cloth as cloth has no objective reality. And so is everything else ordinarily imagined as known.

Incidentally, this argument with which the idealists want to prove the unreality of all material things is particularly meant to refute atomism. Gotama mentions it in the present context not so much for the purpose of answering it immediately, for he has to answer it elaborately in his defence of atomism, which involves the problems of the limit of divisibility of physical things and of the relation between the parts and the whole.

Here what Gotama and Vatsyayana want particularly to draw our attention to is a different point. They want to show that the very use of such an argument by the idealist—his very talk of 'scrutiny by knowledge' while condemning all knowledge as mere deception—indicates a flagrant contradiction. Such a procedure is not permissible. One cannot condemn logic and at the same time claim to prove one's case logically. One cannot disown the verdict of experience and reason, while using the evidence of experience and reason in substantiation of one's own case. It may as well be imagined that the rope seeks support of the hanged man. Yet precisely that is what the idealist does. Hence Gotama cryptically remarks, the

ground of the idealist is no ground at all, because of flat contradiction. Explains Vatsyayana[4]:

If the things are actually scrutinised by knowledge, it cannot be claimed that their real nature is not apprehended. If, on the other hand, the real nature of things is never apprehended, they can never be scrutinised by knowledge. Therefore, 'the scrutiny of things by knowledge' and 'the lack of apprehension of their real nature' are in flat contradiction with each other.

Let us try to see a little more fully what is meant by this.

The idealist wants to deny the reality of all external things. But what is his ground for this denial? It is the want of actual apprehension of the real nature of these things. Thus, for example, the real nature of a piece of cloth is never apprehended, and hence it does not exist. But how does he prove that the real nature of things is never apprehended? What, in other wards, is his ground for proving the want of apprehension of the real nature of things? It is the 'scrutiny' by knowledge' of the things known, i.e. from the idealist's standpoint, ordinarily supposed to be known. There are thus two steps in the idealist's argument, each of which depends on its own specific ground. These are:

(1) Things are nonexistent, *because their real nature is never apprehended.*

(2) The real nature of things is never apprehended, *because their scrutiny by knowledge proves this.*

Gotama and Vatsyayana question the compatibility of these two grounds on which depend the two successive steps of the idealist argument. And they argue that, far from being compatible, the two directly go against each other. annihilate each other. The *scrutiny of things by knowledge* is meaningless unless it is admitted that the things are actually known. Something that is totally unknown cannot be scrutinised by knowledge. Thus this

4. *Ib.* iv.2.27.

ground goes directly against the other one, viz that *the real nature of anything is never apprehended at all*—the ground on which the idealist straightaway concludes that nothing can be real, or, in other words, everything is unreal or nonexistent.

All this shows how dangerous it is for the idealist to talk of scrutinising the objects of knowledge by the standard of knowledge. The danger is that of self-annihilation—the admission of the real existence of the objects, which disproves idealism.

This self-annihilation of the idealists' position is not due to any avoidable error on his part. It follows necessarily and inevitably. All knowledge, as knowledge of objectively existing things, has to be rejected by him as deceptive knowledge or *mithya-buddhi*. But neither crass deception nor total ignorance can be the ground of proving a philosophical position. Hence, though without believing in proofs, the idealist has nevertheless to give proofs for his own purpose. Though committed to the condemnation of the *pramana*-s, he has no alternative but to prove the unreality of the world with the help of the very *pramana*-s thus condemned.

The crucial question, therefore, is: Can the idealist operate without any proof at all? Can he take a stand in philosophy without admitting the *pramana*-s or the sources of valid knowledge? He cannot. His very talk of the scrutiny by knowledge shows this, for this 'scrutiny by knowledge' means nothing else than 'the apprehension of things by the *pramana*-s'. As a matter of fact, not to speak of the philosophers, none can do without the apprehension of things by the *pramana*-s.

Vatsyayana sums up the discussion with the following:

It has to be admitted that the real nature of things is apprehended by the scrutiny of knowledge. This scrutiny by knowledge means nothing but the apprehension of things by the *pramana*-s. Only on the basis of the apprehension by the *pramana*-s is determined what exists and

how it exists, as well as what does not exist and the sense in which it does not exist. This apprehension of things by the *pramana*-s forms the basis of all branches of knowledge, all activities and all behaviour of living beings. The philosopher—who critically examines things—determines what exists and what exists not only on the basis of knowledge. Hence it is futile to argue that nothing is ever apprehended at all. And, if that is so, there is no ground to argue that nothing exists in the objective world.

Vatsyayana adds to this the following dilemma of the idealist.

The idealist has only two alternatives before him. Either he has to claim that there exists definite *pramana* for his central thesis, or he has to admit that there exists no *pramana* for it. In the first alternative, his thesis defeats itself, for his thesis is 'nothing exists', while he himself admits that the *pramana*-s exist. In the second alternative, the same lack of *pramana* can equally justify his opposite thesis, viz 'everything exists'. The idealist cannot have the special privilege of offering his own thesis without any *pramana,* while denying the same privilege to his opponent. If the view that 'nothing exists in the external world' can be justified without any proof, on the same ground, viz the want of proof, the opposite view that 'everything exists in the external world' can be equally justified.

This does not obviously mean that the opponent of idealism wants to have the privilege of operating without any *pramana.* What Vatsyayana means is that such a privilege is impermissible for any philosopher, because it makes philosophical assertions as well as their counter-assertions equally arbitrary. It is obligatory for the philosophers to operate with the *pramana*-s, i.e. to depend on experience and reason. This is what the opponent of idealism does. The idealist, by contrast, wants to reject the normal sources of knowledge. This would not have been absurd if only he could afford to add that his own view needs no proof. However without proof any view is as good or as bad as its antithesis.

There is no doubt that the Indian idealist makes a

number of manoeuvres to wriggle out of the prima facie absurdity of his own position. Readers interested in this may look up the presentation of their case by Satkari Mookerjee in *The Navanalanda-Mahavihara Research Publication,* vol i, pp. 1-176. In this are explained the arguments of Nagarjuna, Candrakirti and Sriharsa in defence of the idealist's credentials for philosophy in spite of their damnation of logic. It is neither possible nor necessary for our present purpose to go into all the details. What interests us rather is the main point on which ultimately depends the prerogative of the idealist, claiming to prove the unreality of the material world without any involvement in the efficacy of these proofs.

This point, to put it briefly, is the distinction between the 'so-called provisional truth of everyday life' and the 'ultimate truth from the metaphysician's standpoint'. From the point of view of the ultimate truth, the proofs or arguments with which the idealists demonstrate the unreality of the material world are as unreal as the material world itself. Still these proofs have their use, inasmuch as they help us to be disentangled from the illusion of the material world. But this use of the proofs is not to be misunderstood as their genuine validity. They are purely practical, and hence provisional. With the dawn of the ultimate metaphysical wisdom, one realises that the demonstration of the unreality of the world is itself as unreal as the world that is demonstrated to be unreal. As Mookerjee[5] explains the position of Nagarjuna as well as of Advaita Vedanta:

My argument also is equally unreal just like the rest of phenomena. So there is no case of uncritical and irrational discrimination. If we maintained that the argument was intrinsically real, we would expose ourselves to the charge of discriminatory treatment. But this is just the reverse of our position. And therefore all the consequential charges are only the creatures of the imagination of the opponent...

5. Mookerjee in NNMRP i.18-21.

The truth of our doctrine can be elucidated by the following example. The *Tathagata* or a disciple of him created a phantom woman in order to annihilate the lingering weakness of a person for the opposite sex. The unregenerated man was deluded into mistaking this phantom woman for a real woman and developed affection for her. In order to purify him of such evil propensities, a phantom man is created. This phantom man is made to behave by a fiat of his will as a wise saint and to enlighten the deluded soul by his instruction. The dupe of the illusion is made to realise the hollowness of his love and thus, by a process of spiritual catharsis, is freed from the sway of lower passions. Though the woman in question is a false appearance and so also the saint, yet the weak aspirant is emancipated from the shackles of lower impulses and passions. This will be the appropriate illustration of our procedure. The argument is like the sermon of the phantom saint and the phantom woman is the prototype of all unreal phenomena. The unreal argument serves to dispel the illusion of reality to which the unregenerated souls fall easy victims... And we endorse this empirical reality (to the unreal argument) as a concession because of its pragmatic utility. The admission of empirical reality is only a make-believe necessary for the creation of conviction of the ultimate truth. It is a necessary expedient and even the enlightened saint must have recourse to it in order to edify the ignorant seeker of truth. It may be an illusion. But it has a pragmatic value, both intellectual and moral... What the Madhyamika philosophy and so also Samkara's Vedanta seek to emphasise is that the world of plurality is not an ultimate truth, though its factuality cannot be denied as long as one is in it. The assertion of the unreality of the world does not therefore spell any danger to the historical, intellectual and moral orders and the disciplines appertaining thereto. These orders have only a provisional validity and as much reality as is felt to be necessary by the realist.

So the ultimate resort of the Indian idealist is his concept of the purely provisional truth of practical life. We have already seen how it is from this standpoint that Dignaga also tries to justify his own seriousness about logic. All the varieties of Indian idealism—Sunya-vada, Vijnana-vada and Advaita Vedanta—have only one story to tell us about logic. It is the story of logic having only a

phantom-truth, which is supposed to be good enough for the purpose of knocking out of our heads the phantom of the material world. In the language of the Indian idealists, this phantom-truth is *samvrti-satya*. Though good enough for the common purposes of the vulgar mob, the enlightened saint is supposed to be free from its spell and to see that even this socalled truth is as much of a phantom as all the other phantoms conjured up by ignorance, the totality of which is called nature in the positive sciences.

The legitimacy of this concept of *samvrti-satya* or *vyavaharika-satya*, if granted, can help the idealist to disown the howling absurdities of his philosophical position to which his own behaviour calls attention. He can subsist on food while denying its reality; he can logically substantiate his view while denying the validity of logic. The food on which he depends for his physical existence, like the logic on which he relies for his intellectual being, is unreal of course; but these are real enough for his practical purposes—i.e. in his own terminology, are *samvrti-satya* or *vyavaharika-satya*.

Hence the crucial question is: Can we accept this queer concept of a *truth which is really false*? As Udayana,[6] in his *Nyaya-kusumanjali*, sums up the main point of the controversy between the idealist and his opponent: according to the former, empirical truth is necessarily different from metaphysical truth, while, according to his opponent, this very theory of two truths is unfounded—the socalled empirical truth of the idealist being the only truth worth recognising in philosophy. But more of this later.

3. Evidence of Dream and Illusion

The *Maitri Upanisad*[7] declared, *indrajalamiva mayamayam svapna iva mithyadarsanam*: the experience of this false world is a mere illusion like that of the magic show, it is like a dream. This brief formulation determined in an

6. See NNMRP i.14.

7. *Mait. Up.* iv.2.

important sense the subsequent course of the development of Indian idealism for over two thousand years. Practically all the Indian idealists follow the Upanisadic suggestion and try to explain away the reality of the material world by reducing our normal experience of it to the status of a dream and illusory experience.

Accordingly, in their refutation of idealism, Gotama and Vatsyayana, after the defence of rationalism, pass on to examine this line of the idealist argument. Gotama first formulates the argument in his usual cryptic form: "The delusion about the sources of knowledge as well as of the objects of knowledge is like the delusion about the objects of dream. Or, it is like the delusion of things shown by the magician's trick, the castle in the cloud and water in mirage."[8] The main points of the argument, though already discussed, may be briefly recapitulated here.

One readily assumes the real existence of all sorts of things in the real material world because one is directly aware of them. But, argues the idealist, direct awareness of objects does not prove their actual existence in the external world. On the contrary, as is repeatedly shown by the experiences of dream, illusion and hallucination, the objects directly known are fictitious. This is the starting point of all the Indian idealists. And from this they conclude that the pretentious claim of direct awareness to prove the objective reality of things known is to be renounced once for all. Since even the direct awareness of objects cannot prove their reality, there is nothing else that can possibly prove it.

There are two steps in this argument. First, the assertion that the objects known in dream, illusion, etc. are fictitious. Secondly, it follows from this that all objects of direct awareness are also such—i.e. are as fictitious as the objects of dream, illusion, etc.

In refutation of idealism, the representatives of its antithesis naturally feel the need of examining both the steps

8. *NS* iv.2.31-2.

of the argument. And they argue that both are philosophically untenable. The starting point of the idealist's argument —viz that the objects experienced in dream etc. are unreal —is the result of a wrong understanding of these experiences. In fact the ilusory experiences are really not so illusory as the idealists want to us to believe. For proving this, the opponents of idealism go into considerable details of the problems of illusion, trying to evolve its satisfactory explanation. But it will be convenient for us to take up this discussion later, particularly because all the opponents of idealism are not agreed on their explanation of dream and illusion.

Let us begin with the point on which practically all the important opponents of idealism are agreed. It is concerning the second step of the idealist's argument—the assertion that all knowledge of objects is to be understood on the model of dream etc., or more simply, the claim that since dream etc. are indisputably false, all knowledge of objects is also false.

Whether the objects experienced in dream etc. are fictitious or not, the fact is that as experience dream etc. are patently false. There can be no dispute on this point between the idealist and his opponent. In dream, you see an elephant; in the patent case of illusion, you see a snake in a rope. The claim of the idealist that this elephant or this snake is purely fictitious can be—and, as a matter of fact, is—questioned by his opponent. But this does not mean that his opponent questions the *falsity of the knowledge* of the elephant or the snake. As knowledge, it is obviously false.

But does it follow from this that even the normal waking-knowledge too is necessarily false? The idealist claims this, and he tries to put his claim in various ways. But whatever may be the way in which he puts it, he cannot escape the charge of wrong generalisation. He can express his point analogically. The testimony of a person definitely known in the past to have given false evidence is never to be trusted. The verdict of direct aware-

ness—which is definitely known to have deceived you in dream etc.—can never be relied on. But this is a wrong analogy. There is no question of trusting again the same experience that deceived before. The question rather is of trusting another species of experience altogether, viz the normal waking-experience. Can you distrust the testimony of all persons on the ground that some persons are known to be confirmed liars? This will be all the more absurd, if there are definite grounds for trusting the other persons.

What the opponents of idealism are driving at is that the normal waking-experience of the objective world cannot be considered false on the ground of dream-experience etc. being so. The two types of experience are not to be equated simply because in the case of both there is direct awareness of the object. On the contrary, the fact is that normal waking-experience has certain distinctive features because of which its verdict cannot be questioned.

What are these distinctive features?

First, normal waking-experience has a peculiar clearness and vividness about itself, or, in Indian terminology, it is *supariniscita*. Secondly, it has the characteristic of not being negated or contradicted by any subsequent experience—the characteristic called *avadhitatva* or *a-visamvaditva*.

In the normal waking-awareness of a post or a pillar, for example, there is a peculiar stability or firmness—a peculiar well-definedness—which is not to be found in dream, illusion and hallucination, notorious for their vagueness, flippancy and incoherence. Of course, the idealist is not to be easily persuaded to admit a qualitative difference between normal waking-experience and the experience of dream etc. merely on this ground. The dream-experience can be as clear and vivid as the normal waking-experience. So long as one dreams of an elephant, one's experience of the elephant can be as much well-defined—as clear and vivid—as one's normal waking-experience of the post or the pillar.

To the opponent of idealism, this is surely a tour de force. However even admitting this, he has a simple question to ask the idealist. The experience of the dream-elephant is false. Why is this so? There is only one answer. On waking up one realises that there is really no elephant. What is there is something else—perhaps just the blank wall. So also is the experience of the snake in the rope. As an experience it is false, because it is eventually realised that there is just a piece of rope and no snake.

All this simply means that the dream-experience or the illusory-experience is admittedly false, *because it is rejected or negated by another experience which follows it.* The dream-experience of the elephant is chased away, as it were, by the subsequent experience of the blank wall, just as the illusory-experience of the snake is chased away by the subsequent experience of the rope. This fact of being chased away by another experience makes an experience false. In Indian terminology, the real ground of the falsity of a false knowledge is *vadhitatva* or *visamvaditva*—the circumstance of it being eventually negated by subsequent knowledge. But this means that its opposite, namely *a-vadhitatva* or *a-visamvaditva*—the circumstance of being 'not rejeced' or 'not contradicted' by any subsequent experience—is the guarantee of the experience being true.

With this point cleared, the opponents of idealism argue that the normal waking-experience—as contrasted with dream-experience etc.—is to be considered true or valid, not only because it is well-defined, but more particularly because it is not contradicted—not negated or rejected—by any subsequent experience. Therefore there is no ground to consider this knowledge as false. And if that is so, there is no ground either to question the reality of the objects of such knowledge, like the post and the pillar.

Let us see how some of the major opponents of Indian idealism argue this point. Claims Akalanka:[9]

9. Shah 176.

The reality of the external world cannot be ruled out because, like consciousness, it also is repeatedly experienced by us. The external world is not unreal, as no *counter-evidence competent to upset it is known to us*. There is no doubt in our mind regarding its reality. The cognition of the external world is not a delusion created by imagination, because it is not contradicted or sublated by other valid cognitions and also because it bears vivid and distinct reflection of the external world. If the ideas are accepted as real, and the external world is denied reality, we go against (says Akalanka) the supreme authority of experience. We do not assume the material world; we perceive it.

"The advocate of idealism", says Subhagupta,[10] "wants to prove the nonexistence of the external world. Now, at the very outset, we prove the reality of the external things on the basis of experience never contradicted in life (*a-visamvada-drsti*)." The alternative for the idealist, Subhagupta goes on, is to argue that the objects corresponding to our normal waking-knowledge are unreal, because their awarness is contradicted in our daily experience. But it is impossible to argue this, because our awareness of the object is not contradicted in our daily experience. Not that there is no awareness at all which is not thus contradicted. Some cases of experience are contradicted no doubt. But the experiences that are actually contradicted belong to the class of the illusory ones. "A knowledge", says Subhagupta,[11] "which is non-Illusive is never contradicted. What is contradicted is always the illusive. The knowledge of a material thing with the real space-time context is never contradicted. Hence it is non-illusive (*a-bhranta*). This alone is the characteristic of the non-illusive knowledge, and nothing else." "(The idealist claims that) even our right apprehension of things (*yathavat pratiti*, literally, the apprehension of things as they are) fully resembles the apprehension of things in dreams. But if so, how is it that it is never contradicted (like dream-experience)?"[12]

10. Subhagupta *BS* 3. 11. *Ib.* 7-8. 12. *Ib.* 10.

Kumarila and the Nyaya-Vaisesikas argue basically the same point. But they go into greater details, in the course of which they show that the starting point of the idealist —the falsity of dream-experience—actually goes against his main conclusion, viz the unreality of the objects of normal waking-experience. As Kumarila[13] argues:

If an experience be false would it not be liable to rejection? If it were to be false even without being rejected, there would remain no restriction (i.e. any experience would be whimsically declared as true or false). For us, dream-experience would certainly be falsified by a waking-experience contradicting it, while for you (the idealist) what would constitute the difference? Of waking-experience as such, there is no proper contradictory experience by which to establish the falsity of such experience, as that of the post and the like. The fact of the waking-experience contradicting the dream-experience is known to all persons. As such it differs from the dream-experience, like the experience that serves to reject (the dream-experience).

Thus the admitted falsity of dream-experience can be established only by one consideration, namely its eventual negation or rejection by normal waking-experience. Since this normal waking-experience is itself never rejected by any further experience, its own truth-claim is beyond any possible doubt.

It follows, argues Kumarila,[14] that the position of the idealist is 'contrary to well-defined or well-ascertained (*supariniscita*) directly visible facts'. "The expression well-defined", he[15] clarifies, "serves to point to the *greater strength* of normal waking-experiences based upon the fact that, in the absence of any experience to the contrary, it cannot but have real authority or trustworthiness."

The expression 'greater strength' is interesting. If between two experiences one has the capacity of chasing out another—of rejecting or nullifying another—it is to be considered as having *greater strength* than the other.

13. Kumarila *SV* niralambana-vada 87 91.
14. *Ib.* 30.
15. *Ib.* 33.

Between dream-experience and normal waking-experience, which has this greater strength? Evidently the normal waking-experience, because it has the capacity of rejecting the verdict of dream-experience. Nothing is therefore more absurd than the claim of the idealist, wanting to measure the worth of normal waking-experience with the standard of the dream-experience etc.

The entire drift of Kumarila's argument is devastating for the idealist. The 'greater strength' of normal waking-experience, once established, he can easily pose a counter-inference against idealism, proving the reality of the external world.

> (Normal waking) knowledge has real external object to correspond to it,
> Because it is knowledge not eventually rejected by another knowledge,
> As for instance, the waking-experience that rejects the dream-experience.[16]

The argument hinges on one point. It is the falsity of dream-experience—i.e. the very point on which the idealist relies so heavily. However far from supporting the position of the idealist, it shows the untenability of idealism. The statement 'dream-experience is false' is meaningless, unless it is shown why it is false. And the only way in which this can be shown is by appealing to the verdict of the normal waking-experience. Only because you wake up and see the blank wall, you know that the experience of the elephant you had in dream was false. Only because you can eventually see the rope in the rope, you actually know that the experience of the snake you had before was false. Thus the only way to know why dream or illusion is false is to appeal to the verdict of the normal waking-experience.

But can one appeal to the verdict of the normal waking-experience without admitting its validity? Can the normal

16. *Ib.* 79-80. This is a philosophical repartee to the idealist's inference: See ch. 3, sec. 5.

waking-experience, without being itself valid, scrap the truth-claim of dream-experience? Obviously not. So the very admission of the falsity of dream-experience presupposes the truth of the normal waking-experience, by which alone this falsity is demonstrated. And if the normal waking-experience is admitted to be true, it is futile to question the reality of the objects corresponding to it. Thus is proved the reality of the external world and idealism refuted.

All this shows that the very talk of the falsity of dream-experience is dangerous for the idealist. The danger is that of self-annihilation. What then can he do? Is he to revise his stand and deny that dream-experience is false? This can perhaps relieve him of the obligation of admitting the truth of normal waking-experiences and the reality of objects corresponding to these. But this, argues Kumarila, proves no less fatal for the idealist, for it deprives him of the only 'corroborative instance' (*drstanta* or *udaharana*), on the strength of which he can formulate his general proposition, that all experience is false. As Kumarila[17] puts it, "And if you argue that this notion (of the falsity of dream-experience) is also false, then, from your veiwpoint dream-experience will never be contradicted; so you would never have the corroborative instance (*drstanta*) of the inference that you want to bring forward against us." It has to be remembered here that, according to the Indian norm of philosophical debate, the corroborative instance showing the universal relation between the probans and the probandum plays the most crucial role in an inference. For the purpose of proving the unreality of everything in the external world, it is not enough for the idealist to assert 'all experience is false' or 'whatever is an experience is found to be false'; he is under the obligation of substantiating it with a corroborative instance, as is actually done in his argument: 'just as in the cases of dream-experience etc.' If, therefore, the idealist is to re-

17. *Ib.* 81.

nounce this corroborative instance—if he denies the very falsity of dream-experience etc. on the strength of which alone he can claim that all experience is false—his entire argument collapses, leaving him with no prospect of ever proving the unreality of all the objects of experience.

4. The Mystic Trance Socalled

To sum up Kumarila's argument so far: the idealist can neither admit nor reject the basic fact of the falsity of dream experience. On both alternatives, he is ultimately obliged to disown his own philosophical position.

What then is he going to do? Perhaps, suggests Kumarila, he is left with another possibility. He can argue that by the same standard which proves dream-experience as false, the normal waking-experience also can be proved false. This standard is that of being rejected by a subsequent knowledge. If, therefore, the idealist can point to some subsequent knowledge rejecting the normal waking-knowledge, he can claim that the latter too is false. But can the idealist point to any knowledge rejecting the normal waking-experience?

Kumarila says that the idealist can explore two possibilities for the purpose. First, he can claim that normal waking-knowledge is negated by its counter-knowledge in the form of dream-experience or illusory-experience. But the result of such a line of argument is disastrous. That the experience of dream, mirage, etc., goes against normal waking-knowledge is, of course, too well-known to be doubted. But the further claim that such counter-experiences have the capacity of rejecting normal waking-knowledge entails the assumption that these counter-experiences are themselves true. Without being itself valid no knowledge can reject the validity of another. But can anybody seriously assert that the experiences of dream, mirage, etc., are true?

The other possibility left for the idealist is to argue that even the normal waking-knowledge is false because it is

eventually cancelled or negated by the supernormal-knowledge supposed to be attained in mystic trance or yoga. While suggesting the possibility of such a line of argument, Kumarila is not imputing an imaginary position to the idealist. In the history of Indian philosophy the idealists do in fact try to take resort to it. It is argued in the Upanisads that the normal waking-experience of the material world is cancelled by dream-experience, which in its turn is cancelled by the experience of dreamless sleep or *susupti*, and further, this experience of dreamless sleep is finally cancelled by the experience of the fourth stage called *turiya*, by which is meant the experience of the mystic trance. Among the later Indian idealists, the Yogacaras in particular try to follow this line of argument. In any case, says Kumarila, the argument can be formulated as follows:[18]

Of such waking-cognitions as those of the post etc., invalidating cognitions do arise in the form of those of the true *yogin*-s (who know all things worldly to be false): and this would certainly make these waking-cognitions equal to dream-cognitions (in point of falsity). And such invalidating cognitions too (as those of the yogis) would belong to all living creatures when they reach the yogic stage; and hence the fact of waking-cognitions having invalidating counter-cognitions becomes established.

In short, just as the dream-experience is proved false because of being subsequently chased away by the normal waking-experience, the normal waking-experience in its turn is to be recognised as false because it is also eventually chased away by the supernormal-experience of mystic trance attainable by yoga.

How are the opponents of idealism to face such an argument? The way in which Kumarila wants to face it is—in the general context of the Indian philosophical situation—remarkably radical. His main point is that this very talk of some supernormal-experience alleged to result from yoga practices is fictitious. Hence it is useless for the

18. *Ib.* 91-93.

idealist to try to prove his own position on its evidence.

Let us see how Kumarila expresses all this.

The yoga experience in the sense of some supernormal form of experience is a plain myth, for none in fact is known to have actually attained it. "But", says Kumarila,[19] "such yoga knowledge is not found to belong to any person in this life." "We do not really know", he continues.[20] "what would happen to a person if he ever actually attains the yoga state." These are simply bantering ways of questioning the veracity of the yoga experience.

Denying thus the socalled yoga experience, he passes on to laugh at the tendency of substantiating a philosophical position on the purely fanciful evidence of it. On the admission of those that believe in yoga, the socalled yoga experience is supposed to be a purely personal experience possessed by the yogi. If this is so—if, in other words, there is no recognised normal standard of assessing it—the representative of any philosophical view can as well claim that it is ultimately proved by the peculiarly private experience of the yogis belonging to his own clan. As Kumarila[21] says, "Our yogis too could have only such invalidating cognitions as would be either subversive of or contrary to your assertion." In short, the idealist has no special privilege of producing some yogis whose private experience proves convenient for the idealist outlook. Such a privilege, if at all granted to the philosophers, is to be granted to them all—as much to the opponents of idealism as to the idealists themselves. In refutation of idealism, therefore, its opponents can as well produce their own yogis, claiming that the experience peculiar to them proves the futility of philosophical idealism. If the yogis are to be believd at all, it cannot be argued that the testimony of only those yogis that support idealism is trustworthy, and the testimony of those that oppose idealism is untrustworthy.

In the Indian context this argument of Kumarila is

19. *Ib.* 93. 20. *Ib.* 94. 21. *Ib.* 94-5.

peculiarly relevant, for the fact is that yoga—and hence also the yogic-experience—is actually approved of by a considerable number of Indian philosophies, idealistic as well as anti-idealistic. Apparently those philosophers that are opposed to idealism cannot afford to believe in the yogic-experience in the sense in which it substantiates idealism. To those opponents of idealism who approve of yoga, therefore, yogic-experience can only mean some sort of experience incompatible with idealism. If yogic-experience is at all relevant for philosophy, such counter-experience of the counter-yogis is to be taken as seriously as the yogic-experience allegedly rejecting the normal waking-experience.

But Kumarila, like the other Mimamsakas, does not believe in yoga and yogic-experience. His sarcastic remark that in refutation of idealism he can as well produce his own yogis to support his philosophical position is not to be taken literally. He is really driving at a different point altogether. Only standard experience has relevance for philosophy. But the idealist tries to draw instead on the peculiarly private experience of certain individuals, which, as experience, is purely fanciful. As he puts it, "And further, you can have no instance to prove that the knowledge of the yogi is such as you assert it to be. As a corroborative instance of our assertion we have the perceptions normally attained."[22]

He knows of course that there are yogis in the country, i.e. there are persons who practise yoga. What he strongly questions, however, is the possibility of such persons ever attaining any valid form of supernormal-experience. His attitude is that you may practise yoga as much as you like, but this will never enable you to attain any form of supernormal-experience. In other words, even the yogis cannot transcend the limits of normal human-experience. As he puts it, *na lokavyatiriktam hi pratyaksam yoginamapi,*

22. *Ib.* 95-6.

"even the perception of the yogis is not different from the one of the everyday life".[23]

Being perception after all, adds Kumarila, even yogic perception is dependent on its 'support' (*alambana*), i.e. has object corresponding to it. In so far as such an object is actually present before the perceiver, the perception is like our own everyday perceptions. But it is ordinarily believed that the yogis can perceive things that are not actually present before them—objects belonging to the past and the future. However, comments Kumarila, even the awareness of things belonging to the past and the future is not a mysterious phenomenon. What makes it look mysterious is the error of calling it some extraordinary form of perception. In our ordinary life, we are often actually aware of the past and the future; but these are called memory (*smrti*) and desire (*abhilasa*) respectively. In memory we are aware of the past and in desire of the future, i.e. of something which we want to come into being. This shows that within the range of ordinary experience there exists the possibility of knowing the past and the future. The yogis, being nothing more than human beings, can know the past and the future in this sense. To view such knowledge of the yogis as special form of yogic perception is simply mystery-mongering. Again, it is sometimes claimed that the yogis develop some special form of vision, called *pratibha*, by which they can transcend the normal limits of the sense-organs. The talk of *pratibha*, in such a sense of supernormal power, is only a myth, because it is never observed anywhere, nor is it well-known in any other form. There is only one sense in which *pratibha* can be accepted and that is the sense of 'pure fancy'—the sense in whch ordinary men have it as much as the yogis.[24]

The point Kumarila wants to establish is that it is idle for the idealists to imagine that the supranormal-experi-

23. Kumarila *SV* pratyaksa-sutra 28. 24. *Ib.* 29-32.

ence of the yogis proves the falsity of the normal waking-experience of everyday life and hence the unreality of the material world. The yogic experience, in so far as it deserves any hearing, is in no way different from and superior to the experience of our ordinary life. It cannot prove anything other than is already proved by the normal waking-experience. We have already seen what, according to Kumarila, this normal waking-experience actually proves. It proves the reality of the objects of experience, or, in short, the untenability of the idealist's position.

Of course the idealist does not take such a sensible view of yogic experience. He claims that because of being based on the suppression of passion, meditation, etc., the yogic experience has some supernatural quality. But while trying to take resort to yogic experience in this sense, the idealist appeals to the verdict of only another form of false experience, because notwithstanding the alleged suppression of passion, meditation, etc. the yogic experience in the sense of some supranatural-experience is only a false experience. Appealing to its verdict means, therefore, appealing to the verdict of false experience, and thus to land in self-contradiction. This is what the idealist does. As Kumarila summs up,[25] "And (in the case of yogic knowledge) such peculiarities as you (the idealist) may attribute—e.g. the fact of its being comprehended through the suppression of passion, meditation, etc.—would also be rejected; and thence your argument would become self-contradictory." His commentator explains, "thus then the yogic-knowledge invalidating the waking-knowledge having proved false, you (idealist) will have to reject all such exceptional characteristics of yogic-knowledge—as the fact of its proceeding from the suppression etc.—from which you conclude such knowledge to be correct. And in this way, your knowledge becomes selfcontradictory."

We have gone into some details of this aspect of

25. Kumarila *SV* niralambana-vada 100.

Kumarila's argument because it has greater interest than that of its immediate context. It shows that Kumarila—or, for that matter, the Mimamsakas in general—want completely to reject the spell of mysticism, which excepting only the plain-speaking materialists, none in Indian philosophy perhaps dares to do. As Stcherbatsky[26] observes, "However, just as the European mind is not altogether and always free from mysticism, so is the Indian mind not at all necessarily subject to it. Not to speak about numerous materialistic doctrines, the orthodox Mimamsakas themselves held about yoga an opinion which probably represents just what all of us, so far as we are not mystics, think about it, viz the yoga is sheer imagination, just as any other ordinary fanaticism." It needs to be added here that even the otherwise staunchest rationalists among the early Indian philosophers like Gotama and Vatsyayana do not dare to ridicule the belief in yoga and yogic-experience. At least their writings, in the form in which they come down to us, give us such an impression. A number of aphorisms or *sutra*-s in the *Nyaya-sutra*,[27] as we have it, are designed even to proclaim the special efficacy of yoga and to defend even the possibility of attaining some form of supernormal-experience resulting from the yogic practices.

Before, however, we too hastily conclude that Gotama himself is a firm believer in yoga and yogic-experience, certain peculiarities of these aphorisms of the *Nyaya-sutra*, as well as a number of other circumstantial evidences, must not be overlooked. First, these aphorisms are only six—a number really insignificant compared to the great bulk of the *Nyaya-sutra*. Assuming these few *sutra*-s to be genuinely Gotama's, we have to conclude that he gives at best a cursory attention to the question of yoga. But the context in which these *sutra*-s are found in the *Nyaya-sutra* cannot but make even such cursory attention look extremely peculiar—so peculiar indeed as

26. Stcherbatsky CBN 31.

27. *NS* iv.2.38-42 & 46.

almost to defeat the main purpose of Gotama. The main theme of his entire *Nyaya-sutra* means nothing if not based on a thorough refutation of philosophical idealism. In the *Nyaya-sutra,* however, the six stray statements approving of yoga and yogic-experience are found to occur *immediately after the section specially designed to refute idealism*—i.e. precisely the context in which Kumarila finds it logically necessary to reject the validity of yogic-experience. Since, from the times of the Upanisads, some of the Indian idealists show the tendency to justify philosophical idealism on the strength of the mystic experience alleged to result from meditation and trance, it is impossible to believe that Gotama is unaware of such a possibility.

In any case it is extraordinarily peculiar for a thorough rationalist like him to argue what amounts to a defence of mystic-experience. What is in fact said in these six stray aphorisms—viz meditation as a method of inducing some form of cultivated catalepsy—is not only alien to the main emphasis of his philosophy but also positively repulsive to it: the *Nyaya-sutra* as a whole gains greater internal consistency without these statements.

It is, therefore, impossible to reject outright the suggestion of some modern scholars that these six aphorisms of the text are later grafted on it, and this without much regard to its internal consistency. As S. N. Dasgupta[28] observes, "the advocacy of yoga methods seems also to be an alien element; these are not found in Vaisesika and are not in keeping with the general tendency of the *Nyaya-sutras;* and the Japanese tradition that Mirok (Maitreya) added them on—as Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Sastri has pointed out—is not improbable." If this suggestion is rejected and the defence of yoga in the *Nyaya-sutra* is accepted as its genuine feature, we are obliged to look at this as indicative of one of the greatest weaknesses of the Nyaya philosophy, which the otherwise most con-

28. Dasgupta i.303.

servative system of Indian thought—the Purva-mimamsa —manages remarkably to outgrow.[29] But the presumption is that these *sutra*-s are not genuine at all.

5. Illusion and Reality

But let us return to the main theme of our discussion, the refutation of idealism.

Even admitting that the failure to extend their own rationalism to reject the spurious claim of yoga and yogic-experience is indicative of a grave weakness of Gotama and Vatsyayana, the importance of their pioneering work in refutation of idealism must not be minimised. Let us have a brief idea of how they propose to analyse the problem of dream, illusion, etc., for the purpose.

The main claim of the idealist is that all knowledge of external things is false because direct knowledge of objects in the cases of dream, illusion, etc. is admittedly false. Such an argument, Gotama[30] cryptically comments, is false, because of the lack of any ground (*hetu,* literally 'probans') for it. What does Gotama mean by this 'lack of ground'? Vatsyayana explains that this is to be understood in more than one sense:

First, there is no ground to argue that the falsity of dream-experience necessarily precludes the possibility of the truth of normal waking-experience. The dream-experience is admittedly false. But the only way of proving it as false is to depend on the verdict of the normal waking-experience. This verdict of the normal waking-experience, therefore, has to be accepted as true, because without being itself true it cannot prove the falsity of the dream-experience. And, if the verdict of the normal waking-experience is true its objects are to be accepted as

29. I have elsewhere discussed the question of the radicalism of the Purva-mimamsa: Chattopadhyaya *Bharatiya-darsana* (Bengali) 237ff ; Chattopadhyaya IA 202ff.

30. *NS* iv.2.33.

real. The case of the idealist would have perhaps been stronger if, instead of depending merely on certain stray examples of false-experience, he could mention any definite ground because of which all experiences were to be considered false, and therefore their objects unreal. But it is impossible for him to point to any such ground, for there is really none. By contrast, the opponent of idealism has definite ground to prove his own case, namely the truth of normal waking-experience. This is proved by its very capacity to reject dream-experience.

But, claims the idealist, his argument proving the falsity of all experience is really not without a ground. This ground is: 'being an experience'. The very fact of being an experience—or, of being a form of awareness—proves the falsity of all experience; the cases of dream, illusion, etc., being mentioned only as suitable examples to illustrate this. His general proposition is: 'Whatever is an experience is found to be false' or 'All experience, being experience, is false'.

Such a general proposition, argue the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, does not make any sense at all. Assuming that there is no truth anywhere in the world, the very concept of falsity loses significance, and the very possibility of ascertaining the falsity of a false-experience becomes impossible. A knowledge is judged false, only because there is some truth in the standard of which it can be so judged. If there is no truth anywhere in the world, if all knowledge as knowledge is necessarily false, the very talk of false-knowledge becomes meaningless. The knowledge of the snake-in-the-rope is false, precisely because there is the true knowledge of the rope-in-the-rope. If the knowledge of the rope-in-the-rope is equally false, how can it ever be determined that the knowledge of the snake-in-the-rope is really false? So is the case of the dream-experience. It is false and known as false, precisely because there is another knowledge by which it is thus judged and which is accepted as true. There is thus no escape from

the point which, as we have already seen, is argued by Kumarila, who might have taken it from the Nyaya-Vaisesikas. Without accepting the truth of normal waking-experience, it is impossible to accept that even the patent cases of false-experience are really false.

Secondly, Gotama's comment that the idealist's argument is based on no ground at all, explains Vatsyayana, has another important significance. The argument assumes that since dream-experience, as experience, is patently false, the objects of such experience are totally unreal or just fictions—existing nowhere in the real world. As a matter of fact, it is this assumption that leads the idealist to depend so much on the evidence of dream-experience, etc. His main point is to prove the unreality of the material world. This can be proved not merely on the assumption that normal waking-experience is false but on the further assumption that the object of a false-experience is necessarily illusory. This further assumption of the idealist, argues Vatsyayana, is as baseless as his other assumption concerning the falsity of all experience.

That, as an experience, the dream-experience is false has of course to be admitted by everybody. When you dream of an elephant, for example, no elephant is actually present before you. Hence your experience of the elephant in dream is the experience of an object which is not there. But the idealist does not claim merely this. What he claims further is that the object of the experience—the elephant for example—is itself fictitious. It is supposed to have no real existence anywhere in the external world. And this is proved, argues the idealist, by the nonapprehension—the lack of awareness or the want of experience—of the dream-objects in the waking state. When you wake up you no longer experience any elephant, and this want of awareness of the elephant in the waking state proves that what is dreamt of is unreal or fictitious.

Such a defence of the idealist position, argues Vatsyayana, is fatal for idealism itself. If the lack of awareness

of something during the waking state proves the total unreality of the thing, the presence of awareness of something during the waking state has to be admitted as positive ground for its reality. In Vatsyayana's terminology, the law of logic demands that a ground or probans (*hetu*) can be considered efficacious for proving something only when its opposite proves the opposite: *viparyaye hi hetu-samarthyam*. Thus 'x' can be accepted as the ground of proving 'y' only so long as 'not-x' is admitted to have the efficacy of proving 'not-y'—it being obviously impossible to imagine that 'x' proves both 'y' and 'not-y'. The same ground cannot be viewed as proving both the thesis and the antithesis. It can be assumed to prove a thesis only when its opposite is admitted to prove the antithesis.

Therefore, if 'the lack of awareness of things during the waking state' is assumed to prove the 'unreality of things', the 'presence of awareness of things during the waking state' is to be admitted as proving 'the reality of things'. It is evidently ridiculous to argue that the 'unreality of things' is proved indiscriminately both by the 'absence of their awareness during the waking state' as well as by the 'presence of their awareness during the waking state'. Vatsyayana explains the logical law under consideration with the help of an analogy: The *absence of a lamp in a room* can be a real ground for the *absence of perception of the things* there, only because the presence of the lamp in the room proves the presence of the perception of these things. If nothing is perceived in the room both in the presence as well as in the absence of the lamp, how can the absence of lamp itself be considered the real ground for the absence of perception of the things? As a matter of fact only because the presence of a lamp in a room results in the perception of the things there that we can argue that the absence of the lamp in the room is the real ground for admitting the absence of their perception. The idealist can argue that the absence of awareness of the dream-objects in the normal waking states proves the unreality of these objects only in so far as he is prepared to

admit that the presence of awareness of all sorts of objects during the normal waking-experience proves the reality of all these. This, to say the least, is fatal for the idealist, whose main purpose is to prove the unreality of all sorts of things normally experienced during the waking state.

So there is no ground for the idealist to prove that the objects experienced in dream are unreal or fictitious. What then is the actual nature of these objects and how are we to account for their false experience? Gotama answers, "The awareness of objects in dream is like that of memory (*smrti*) and resolution (*samkalpa*)" and, to complete the sentence, Vatsyayana adds, "having for their objects the previously experienced ones"[31]. That memory has for its objects the things that are previously experienced is of course well known. When you remember an elephant, the elephant—the object of your memory—is something which, though not actually present before you at that time, has nevertheless been previously perceived by yourself. But what is meant by 'resolution' or *samkalpa*, too, having for it the previously perceived objects? What, in other words, is meant by 'resolution' or *samkalpa*? As it is explained by the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas, it means the desire to obtain in the future something which is experienced in the past. At the time of the desire, its object is not present before the desirer; still the object as such is not unreal, because it has previously been experienced by him. One can desire to have food or cloth in the future only because one had the previous experience of food and cloth; but one can never desire anything about which one had no past experience whatsoever.

What then is the main point of Gotama's argument? Vatsyayana answers: "just as memory and resolution, having as these do for their objects the things that were experienced in the past, are not competent to condemn these objects (i.e. pronounce these as unreal), so also dream, having for its objects the things that were experi-

31. Vatsyayana on *NS* iv.2.34.

enced in the past, is not competent to condemn these". Memory and resolution are not forms of valid knowledge, for their objects are not actually present before one when one remembers or desires them. But this does not prove that their objects are unreal, for as objects these are really experienced in the past. In the same way the mere fact that dream-experience is false as an experience does not prove that the objects dreamt of are unreal; on the contrary, these are real objects actually experienced in the past. You can dream of an elephant precisely because you had the actual experience of a real elephant in the past: since the elephant is not there before you while you are dreaming your dream-*experience* is undoubtedly false; but this proves nothing against the reality of the dream-*object* itself. It is a real elephant belonging to the real external world, as actually experienced in the past.

Incidentally, though Kumarila differs from the Nyaya-Vaisesikas in the details of explaining dream, he is fully agreed with the Nyaya-Vaisesikas in arguing against the idealists that the falsity of the dream-*experiences* does not imply the unreality of dream-*objects*. The objects experienced in dreams are nothing but real objects really experienced, though in some different space-time context. In order to put special emphasis, he says, "Even in dream-experience, the externality of the object is not at all absent. In all cases of experience, there is a necessary reference to external object, though the spatial and temporal contexts of these objects may be different. As a matter of fact, what is known in dream-experience is some real external object that had been actually known either during the present life or in some past life or at some other time and in dream it is known either with the same space-time context or with a different one."[32]

But all this, argues the idealist, is a useless assumption. The fact, on the contrary, is that dream-experience is not necessarily the experience of objects previously actually

32. Kumarila *SV* niralambana-vada 107-9.

perceived. There are well-known cases of weird or unearthly dreams like those of 'cutting one's own head', 'eating one's own head', 'catching the sun', 'swallowing the sun'. Obviously it is impossible to argue that in the past one had the actual experience of 'cutting one's own head' etc., which form the objects of such dream-experiences. How then can the opponent of idealism argue that the objects dreamt of are real objects of past experience?

The later representatives of the Nyaya view like Visvanatha answer such an objection. The total theme of the dream like 'cutting one's own head' may not form the object of a unitary past experience. Nevertheless such a dream is possible because each of the components of this total theme is actually experienced in the past. One did have the experiences of the 'act of cutting' and of 'one's own head', etc. The error of the dream consists in wrongly relating these components with each other; but this misplaced relation is itself possible precisely because each of the components related is actually experienced in the past.[33]

Even admitting all this, the idealist can argue that his own position remains unaffected. The objects dreamt of may be the same as objects actually experienced in the past, either collectively or severally. But that proves nothing against idealism, for idealism is not based on the denial of the possibility of the actual experience of objects either in the past or in the present. Its main point is that even the actual experience of the object is no proof for the real existence of the object, as it is palpable in 'the examples of dream, illusion etc'. Assuming that certain objects are actually experienced in the past, their reality status cannot be better than those objects that are experienced at present in dreams. In other words, all experience of objects is false in so far as it imputes external reality to the objects, and this irrespective of the circumstance of the objects being experienced during the waking

33. Tarkavagisa v.140-41.

or dreaming state. The example of dream—like that of the patent cases of illusion—is mentioned only to show how puerile is the claim of experience to prove the external reality of the objects.

Such a defence of idealism, argues Vatsyayana, can at best be selfdefeating. Its basis is the assumption that there is really no difference between dream-experience and actual experience (normal waking-experience). As experience both are supposed to be equally false—equally deceiving with a sham show of external reality. However, if this is admitted, the only examples on the strength of which the idealist hopes to prove his case becomes meaningless. It is pointless to try to rely on the examples of dream, illusion, etc., if they have no distinctive feature, and the only distinctive feature of such experiences proving helpful for the idealist is their palpable falsity. But falsity has no meaning without reference to truth —no more than specifying something as black in an eternal darkness. This point is already argued by Vatsyayana particularly with reference to dream-experience and, in the present context, he wants to argue it over again with reference to the patently illusory experiences.

A knowledge or an experience, in order to be admitted as false or illusory, has necessarily to have some term of reference, on which therefore it depends. Anticipating the terminology subsequently used by Gotama, Vatsyayana calls this term of reference *pradhana*, literally 'the primary'. Illusory knowledge thus depends on a 'primary' knowledge. One has, for example, the illusion of a person in a pillar. This knowledge of the person-in-the-pillar necessarily presupposes another knowledge on which it is dependent—its 'primary' knowledge. What then is the 'primary' knowledge in this case? It can only be the knowledge of a person-in-a-person. Somebody who has never before seen a person—has no knowledge of a human being at all—can never mistakenly see a person in a pillar. His visual sense comes in contact with the general features of a pillar. This reminds him of a person because of the

general resemblance of the pillar to a person. The resemblance eventually misleads him to the judgment: This is a person. But how can he remember a person at all? This is possible only because of the reminiscent impression of the past experience of a person, which, in its turn, presupposes the actual experience of a person in the past. The illusory experience of a person-in-a-pillar is thus ultimately dependent on the real experience of a person-in-a-person—the 'primary' knowledge in the case under consideration. Moreover, since without the admission of the truth of this 'primary' knowledge, the falsity of the false knowledge is neither understood nor explained, it has to be admitted that false knowledge ultimately depends on a true knowledge in the sense of having an ultimate reference to it. But is there any sense in talking of true knowledge of something that is totally unreal or merely fictitious? Evidently not. 'True knowledge' makes sense only when it is admitted to be the knowledge of truly existing things—of real things of the real world. From this point of view, therefore, the very evidence of false knowledge ultimately implies the real existence of the real things of the world. Dream-knowledge, being admittedly a form of false knowledge, cannot be an exception to this. The elephant and the mountain dreamt of ultimately depends on the 'primary' knowledge of the elephant and the mountain—i.e. on the right knowledge of these and therefore on their reality.

The case of the idealist is based on the assumption that the very fact of false knowledge being cancelled by true knowledge proves the total unreality of the object of the former. With the dawn of true knowledge it is realised that the object previously known is not there.

Such an assumption, argue Gotama and Vatsyayana, is a gross distortion of fact. The fact is a simple one: the cancellation of one knowledge by another, or, more specifically, *the cancellation of a false knowledge by a true knowledge*. But this is by no means to be interpreted as

the cancellation of the reality of the object of false knowledge by true knowledge. The object of the false knowledge remains real, notwithstanding the cancellation of false knowledge. Vatsyayana illustrates this with the typical case of the false knowledge of a person-in-a-pillar and of its cancellation by a subsequent true knowledge. With the dawn of right knowledge—namely that of a pillar-in-a-pillar—the false knowledge of the person-in-the-pillar is cancelled of course. But this does not any way affect the reality of the person, the actual object of the false knowledge.

This example, according to Vatsyayana, can be used as a very useful model for understanding all cases of the cancellation of false knowledge by right knowledge—the cancellation of the illusion of things shown by the magician's trick, of seeing castle in the cloud and water in mirage. In all these cases, what the eventual right knowledge actually cancels is the mere fact of false knowledge, but not the objects of the false knowledge. *The cancellation of an illusion does not prove the illusory nature of the object of illusion.* The knowledge of the coins shown by the magician's stage-craft is later dispelled by right knowledge; but this does not mean that coins as such are removed from the realm of reality. The *experience* of the castle seen in the cloud, like the *experience* of water in the mirage, proves illusory no doubt; but this does not mean that castle as such and water as such are illusory entities. In the event of the coin, castle or water existing absolutely nowhere—i.e. in the event of such things being totally unreal or fictitious—even the false knowledge of these would have been impossible, for, as already argued, false knowledge of an object ultimately presupposes a 'primary' knowledge, which is nothing but the right knowledge of the same object as a real entity.

In this connection, Vatsyayana mentions two more considerations. First, no illusory experience is purely fortuitous. Every illusion has its own specific conditions, which, in their turn, are real factors of the real world. Second,

the illusory experience is only a private experience of an individual and as such it is worse than inadequate to form the basis of a universal conclusion concerning the unreality of objects.

If the magician's stage-craft can deceive you with an illusion, the magician himself is obliged to have his own paraphernalia for the purpose, without assuming the reality of which the illusion itself remains unexplained. You can see a castle in the cloud no doubt; but you can see this only when there is an actual configuration of cloud in the sky resembling a castle. The experience of the castle presupposes the reality of the cloud, of a certain configuration of it and the distance intervening between it and the perceiver. So also is the optical illusion of water in mirage. It is there only when the solar rays, under the influence of the heat radiating from the surface of the earth, acquire some kind of throbbing movement to give the false impression of water to a distant person: *surya-maricisu bhaumenosmana samsrstesu spandamanesudaka-buddhih bhavati.*[34] This means that illusions can be explained, and these can be explained only on the assumption of the real things of the real world.

Incidentally, because the evidence of illusion is the stock-in-trade of the Indian idealists, other important representatives of the antithesis of idealism coming after Vatsyayana take up his line of argument in refutation of idealism. Kumarila argues on the same line, and for this purpose he takes under consideration certain other typical examples of illusion mentioned by the idealists. One of them is 'the fire-brand circles'—the illusory perception of a circular fire when, in darkness, a burning object or a flaming torch is speedily moved in the circular path. Another is the perception of a hare's horn. Referring to these as well as to their cancellation, Kumarila[35] says:

The cause of misconception in the notion of the 'fire-brand circle' is the fire-brand whirled with extreme rapidity; in

34. Vatsyayana on *NS* iv.2.35.
35. Kumarila *SV* niralambana-vada 109-113.

that of the 'imaginary cities' seen in the sky, the particular shape of the clouds and also some previously experienced houses etc.; in that of the mirage, the previously experienced water as well as the sand heated by and reflecting the rays of the sun. And of the notion of the hare's horns, the cause would be either the horns of other animals or the peculiar shape of the hare itself. And, of the negation of the hare's horns, the cause is the baldness of its head. Of the notion of *emptiness* of the object, the real cause is a place being unoccupied by any object. And in the cases of the improbable utterances (like 'hundreds of elephants on the tip of the finger') the cause lies in the objects themselves.

For explaining the genesis of the illusion as well as its cancellation, one is referred back again and again to the real things of the material world. Is it not then preposterous to imagine—as the Indian idealists do—that the very evidence of illusory experience proves the illusoriness of the material world?

That this is really preposterous, argues Vatsyayana, is further evidenced by the fact that the illusory experience is a purely private experience while the theory of the illusoriness of the world presupposes the universality of illusory experience. When the magician with his stagecraft creates illusions for the spectator, he is himself free from their spell. He shows, e.g., gold coins on the stage in lumps of mud. But these gold coins are seen on the stage only by the spectator and not by the magician. On his own part, he sees only lumps of mud in the lumps of mud, and if his trick needs the use of some gold coins too, he sees the gold coins only as they really are. So are the experiences of the other illusions: a person sees the mirage of water at a distant spot of the sandy surface, but another person near this spot does not see the mirage; while one person sees a snake in the rope, another person sees only the rope in the rope; while you see a person in a pillar, your friend standing nearer the pillar sees in it nothing but the pillar. And so on. All these show that while somebody has such illusory experiences, others have true or

right experiences of the objects. On the assumption of the idealist that everything in the material world is an illussion, all persons should have simultaneously experienced only the illusory things.

6. Is Illusion Totally Illusory?

To sum up the discussion so far. Illusion is inconceivable without reality. The illusory experiences, far from proving the illusoriness of the material world, are themselves inexplicable without the admission of the reality of the material world.

Still the fact of illusion is there. And it needs a thorough theoretical investigation.

The first question is: What is meant by illusion? Or what is the exact sense in which an illusion is an illusion? Or how much illusory it actually is? Or is an illusion totally illusory? That is what the idealists claim. But, argue Gotama and Vatsyayana, this claim can at best be based on a superficial understanding of the nature of illusion. Even the well-known cases of illusion are not as fully and completely illusory as the idealists want us to believe. The basic reasons for this as suggested by them are later elaborated by their followers.

For convenience of discussion, Vatsyayana takes up in this connection three common cases of illusion. These are: seeing a person in a pillar, a flock of ducks in a distant flag, a dove in a darkish lump of clay. One peculiarity of illusion can easily elude us if cases like these are considered separately. When the three are examined together, a striking feature common to all illusions leaps before our eyes. You have the illusion of a person *only* in the pillar, or of flock of ducks *only* in the flag or of the dove *only* in the clay. Never is there an illusion of a flock of ducks in the pillar or in the clay, just as there is never the illusion of the dove in the flag or in the pillar. The list of such examples can be indefinitely extended: you have the illusion of a snake *only* in the rope and never in the shining

shell, just as you have the illusion of silver *only* in the shining shell and never in the rope.

There is thus an obvious selectivity—a rigid regularity—involved even in the cases of common illusions. This has to be accounted for. And it can be explained only on the assumption that there is an *objective coercion* even in the cases of the common illusions. You do not have the liberty of having any illusion anywhere and at any time. Something outside your own mind or your own consciousness—something that is objective—dictates terms to the nature of the illusion. The pillar determines that you are to have the illusion of a person and specifically so. The flag obliges you to have the illusion only of the ducks, just as the clay obliges you to have the illusion only of the dove. Not that you are under any obligation to have an illusion. Under normal conditions you can certainly see a pillar in a pillar, a flag in a flag. These are cases of right knowledge, and not of illusion. However, in so far as you have an illusion, you are not free from some objective coercion—something outside your consciousness dictating terms to your consciousness. Without understanding this objective coercion, the common cases of illusion remain unexplained.

How then are we to understand this fact of objective coercion about illusion? To begin with, there is no conceivable explanation on the assumption of the idealist. On this assumption, there is no objective world at all. Things ordinarily believed as belonging to the real objective world are totally unreal—illusory or fictitious. If this is so—if the pillar, flag, clay and everything else are all unreal or illusory—there can as well be the illusion of anything anywhere. But no illusion is actually random. There is definite restraint on the nature of the illusion and this is due to something that is itself nonillusory.

Therefore in the case of the illuson, e.g., of a person in a pillar, at least one factor is real or nonillusory. It is the presence of the pillar itself. This pillar, if known as pillar, would have been right knowledge. The fact that it is

known instead as a person makes the knowledge illusory. But the illusion itself is not a bare nothingness floating on mere nothingness. It has a definite substratum or an objective basis, viz the presence of the pillar. In the absence of this particular basis, there is the absence of the specific illusion.

But how is it that this specific basis leads to the specific illusion? How is it that only in the presence of the pillar there is specifically the illusion of the person? Because, answers Vatsyayana, there is the general resemblance between the pillar and the person. This *law of general resemblance* accounts for all cases of common illusions: there is the illusion of ducks only in the flag or the illusion of snake in the rope only because of some general resemblance. It is the general resemblance between *that* which is actually perceived and *what* is wrongly perceived in it. There is illusion only when this general resemblance between the two misleads one to see *what* exists elsewhere in *that* which is actually present before the perceiver.

This distinction between the *that* and the *what*—between something actually present and something else which, though existing elsewhere, is wrongly perceived in it—is for Vatsyayana absolutely crucial for understanding the nature of illusion. And, as his later followers more explicitly argue, this clearly proves that at least the common cases of illusion are not totally illusory. Even in them, there is no illusion at all in so far as there is the actual perception of some general feature of *that* which is really present—the perception, for example, of some general feature of the real pillar, without which there cannot be the specific illusion of the person-in-the-pillar. In Indian terminology, this factor of the illusion which we have been referring to as 'that' is called *tattva* or *dharmi*. Since the common forms of illusion necessarily depend on such a factor and since, moreover, this factor is indicative of true knowledge—the knowledge of something real—it has to be admitted that even the common illusions contain some element of truth.

This is further corroborated by the nature of the experience correcting the illusory experience. In the case of the illusion of a person-in-pillar, the illusory experience itself is expressed as: '*This* is a person'. The nature of the right knowledge eventually correcting or rejecting it is expressed in the form: '*This* is a pillar'. The knowledge of something that is actually present remains unaffected by the process of the correction. What this correction really means is the rejection of the experience of the person and the replacement of it by the experience of the pillar—in short, only the correction of the mere *what*-element of the illusory experience. But the fact that the correction of the illusion does not in any way disturb the presentative basis of the preceding illusory experience—the basis which is expressed as 'this'—proves that, in so far as the illusory experience is the experience of the 'this' it is not illusory at all.

So are all cases of common illusions. The illusory experience expressed as '*This* is a snake' is eventually corrected by the experience expressed as '*This* is a rope'. The *snake* is replaced by the *rope*, but the experience of certain general features of the rope previously perceived as the 'this' remains unaffected. In so far as the previous illusory experience is an actual experience of the 'this', it is true knowledge. Thus, in short, even common illusions contain an element of truth, namely the actual experience of some general feature of something objectively real.

If illusion itself is not fully illusory, how can it be competent to prove the illusoriness of the entire objective world?

7. Indian Theories of Illusion

Since the Indian idealists want to prove their case largely on the evidence of illusion, they feel obliged to work out theories of illusion justifying their main contention. The three important varieties of Indian idealism—Sunya-vada, Vijnana-vada and Advaita Vedanta—have their own

theories of illusion, known respectively as *asat-khyati, atma-khyati* and *anirvacaniya-khyati.*

The representatives of the antithesis of idealism also work out their theories of illusion in rejection of the idealist ones. In the maturer phase of the Indian philosophical activity, two such theories acquire special prominence. These are *anyatha-khyati* (or *viparita-khyati*) and *a-khyati.* The first one is subscribed to by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas and Kumarila. But Prabhakara, another prominent representative of the Mimamsa, refuses to accept this theory and works out his own, which is known as *a-khyati.*

The main purpose of these theories of illusion—both idealist and anti-idealist—is to define the exact status of the object of illusory experience. For convenience of discussion, let us stick here mainly to the most typical example of illusion mentioned in Indian philosophical literature, namely that of seeing a snake in the rope.

What is the exact reality-status of this snake? Among the Indian idealists, the Sunya-vadins answer that it is just nothingness, pure nonexistence, or a mere fiction. In the context of their theory of illusion, they are not discussing the question of any or every snake—not the question of the snake in general—but the question of the specific snake that is experienced in illusion. It is not a question of a snake but of *the* snake-seen-in-the-rope. Does such a snake exist anywhere or in any dimension of time—past, present and future? The Sunya-vadins argue that, nothing is more absurd than such a possibility. *The* snake that you specifically perceive in the rope exists nowhere and in no dimension of time. It is a pure nonentity, pure nothingness, or, in Indian terminology, *atyanta-asat,* absolutely nonexistent. It has its being only in the illusion itself. Hence their theory is known as *asat-khyati*—the word *asat* meaning the nonexistent and the word *khyati,* in the context of the theories of illusion, meaning false knowledge. Illusion is the false knowledge of the totally nonexistent.

However, even admitting that *the* snake as perceived in the rope is totally nonexistent, there remains the question of the rope which is falsely perceived as the snake. Is this rope itself to be admitted as real? The Sunya-vadins answer that it cannot be. Apart from various independent philosophical considerations indicating the unreality of this rope like that of everything else in the material world, there remains another question concerning its reality. What leads one to believe in the reality of this rope? There is ultimately one answer to this. One is directly aware of it—actually perceives it or experiences it. But, argue the Sunya-vadins, the very example of seeing the purely non-existing snake has already shown how precarious it is to depend on direct awareness for assuming the reality of the object of awareness. After all the snake just proved totally nonexistent is, during the illusion, as directly experienced as anything else. So the alleged proof for the existence of the rope too is not there, not to speak of many other grounds shown by Nagarjuna and his followers indicating the unreality of all the material things. Thus the Sunya-vada theory of illusion, fully stated, amounts to the *experience of the nonexistent in the nonexistent*: like the snake experienced, the rope in which it is experienced is itself nonexistent. Lest such a view go too much against common sense, the Sunya-vadins add that though both the snake and the rope are totally unreal, there is some sense in viewing the snake as all the more unreal, for the rope is after all not illusory from the practical or empirical point of view. The rope has that peculiar reality which is really unreal—the peculiar truth which is really false-hood—i.e. the socalled *samvrti-satya* or *vyavaharika-satya* of the idealists.

The Vijnana-vadins differ at least ostensibly from the Sunya-vadins, and even want to make this difference look momentous. The snake seen in the rope, they argue, cannot be viewed as a total nonentity or pure *asat*, because what is indisputable about this illusion is the fact that there is an *idea of the snake*. This idea has therefore to be

accepted as real and, from this point of view, the experience is not the experience of the bare nothing. As a thing existing in the material world, the snake is of course fictitious. Nevertheless it is real in the strict sense of the idea of the snake—i.e. as something purely mental, something appertaining to the *atman* or the knower, in the Vijnana-vada sense of a stream of consciousness. What then is illusion? It is the false knowledge (*khyati*) of the pure ego (*atman*) as something objective. This theory is accordingly known as *atma-khyati,* literally the false knowledge of the self. It is a false knowledge because when you see the snake in the rope, you do not know it as a mere idea; you are deluded instead to imagine that it is a snake existing as if in the external or material world.

Though the Vijnana-vadin works out this theory of illusion for the purpose of justifying his fundamental mataphysical position, there is at least apparently some difficulty about it. Not only the snake seen in the rope is something purely subjective falsely taken as objective, but so also is the rope normally seen in the rope. This, the Vijnana-vadin argues, is precisely the reason why he wants us to view all experience as illusory. But there is some prima facie difficulty in taking such a position. If the snake seen in the rope is as much a bare idea as the rope seen in the rope, what prevents the Vijnana-vadin to rely on the latter for the purpose of proving his own case? His own procedure shows that he has to assume, at least tacitly, some difference between the illusion of the snake and the perception of the rope—or some difference between the illusory snake and the actual rope—though, from the standpoint of his fundamental metaphysical position, such a difference is hardly permissible.

How then does the Vijnana-vadin propose to solve this difficulty? There is only one way for him and that is to resort to the concept of the purely provisional truth of the empirical level—the *samvrti-satya*—which is ultimately false of course. And the fact is that the Vijnana-vadin

does it as much as the Sunya-vadin. Though from the standpoint of the ultimate metaphysical illumination or *paramarthika-satya,* both the snake seen in the rope as well as the rope seen in the rope are false or illusory, the latter is true though in the peculiar sense of being ultimately false.

The theory of illusion associated with Advaita Vedanta is *anirvacaniya-khyati,* literally the false knowledge (*khyati*) of the indescribable (*anirvacaniya*). The fact is that while seeing a snake in the rope, what one actually experiences is a snake. But what is the exact status of the snake thus experienced? It cannot be viewed as just *asat* or nothingness, for what is just nothingness—like the son of a barren woman—can never be experienced. Failing thus to view the snake as purely nonexistent, are we to consider it as *sat* or really existing? This again is absurd, because one eventually realises that the snake seen exists in no dimension of time—past, present and future. So this snake is neither existent nor nonexistent—neither an entity nor a nonentity—neither *sat* nor *asat*. But these two are the only conceivable alternatives of describing the basic nature of something. The object of the illusory experience, defying as it does both the possibilities, has therefore to be viewed as *anirvacaniya* or the indescribable. A peculiarly indescribable something is somehow or other conjured up in illusion and becomes the object of experience. And what it is that does this conjuring trick? Evidently, ignorance—called *avidya* or *maya*—for the illusion is there so long as there is ignorance, and with the removal of ignorance by right knowledge is also removed the illusion. Thus, in short, a mysterious snake—neither existing nor nonexisting—is temporarily produced by ignorance and becomes the object of illusory experience.

We have already seen how this understanding of common illusion provides the Advaita Vedantists with the model for explaining what they consider the basic illusion of the material world in pure spirit. For the sake of clarification, however, it may be useful to raise here one ques-

tion. They propose to call the object of illusion something indescribable, and want us to understand this as indicative of a basic difference with the Sunya-vada view according to which the object of illusion is totally unreal or absolutely nonexistent. But does this mean that in the Advaita view the indescribable snake seen in the rope is a shade more real—or has at least some more elements of truth—than the purely fictitious snake spoken of by the Sunya-vadins? Surely not. What then is the justification for calling it *anirvacaniya* as distinct from the purely *asat*? According to the followers of the Advaita Vedanta, the purely nonexistent like the son of a barren woman is more unreal—more fictitious—than the indescribable object actually experienced in illusion, though this does not mean that the latter is in any way more true or more real than the former. This is supposed to be a theory of the degrees of untruth and unreality, not to be confused with any suggestion of the degrees of truth and reality. But this does not at all alter the basic claim of the Advaita Vedantists that the object of illusion exists nowhere and in no time. It too is basically *asat*, though with some special nuance delicately distinguishing its unreality from the more fictitious called *alika*. Both are phantoms, though as a phantom the second is more extravagantly so.

In spite of all that is apparently novel in this theory and in spite of the new terminology intended to justify the novelty, the whole thing is at best a ramification of what is already suggested by the Sunya-vadins—a suggestion which no brand of Indian idealism could do without. The Sunya-vadins are the first to suggest the theory of the degrees of untruth and unreality. The snake seen in the rope is more unreal or more untrue than the rope seen in the rope. But this does not at all mean that the rope seen in the rope is in the least more real than the snake seen in it. The latter is only an illusion within the broader structure of a more general illusion. This aspect of the theory, so vital for Advaita Vedanta, is borrowed in toto from Sunya-vada. It is no wonder that Jayanta

Bhatta, in his list of the theories of illusion, completely ignores the Advaita view.[36]

Such are the theories of illusion offered by the Indian idealists. The main point sought to be emphasised by all this is that the object of the illusory experience exists nowhere in the material world.

In rejection of idealism Prabhakara suggests the theory known as *a-khyati,* literally 'no-illusion'. It is thus called because Prabhakara questions the fact of illusory experience. The experience of seeing snake in a rope or silver in a shell is no unitary experience that can be called illusory. In cases like these, there are actually two separate pieces of knowledge. One of these is of the nature of actual perception, the other of recollection. When the shell is known as 'this is silver', there is first the perceptual knowledge of the shell actually present. It is, of course, not a fullfledged perception of the shell as a shell; it is rather the perceptual knowledge of some general features of the shell and has therefore only the general outlines of a perception—the perception of the barely 'this'. As perception, this is inadequate no doubt; but this inadequacy does not mean its falsity. The general features of the shell, though perceived in bare outlines as merely 'this', are real features of the real shell. Thus far the perception is true as perception, a piece of right knowledge. Secondly, because of the similarity of the general features of the shell as actually perceived during the present experience with the general features of the silver as actually experienced in the past, the present perception of the shell as merely 'this' results in the recollection of the silver as previously perceived. This is a real recollection of a real past experience, and hence there is nothing wrong about it as such.

Thus both the perception of the shell as merely 'this' and the recollection of the previously experienced silver as silver proper, are pieces of true knowledge or right

36. See Tarkavagisa v.172.

knowledge—both having for their objects real things of the really objective world. The experience in question is a complex one, made of two components, which are both true. What then is wrong about this complex experience taken in its totality? This, argues Prabhakara, is only a negative factor, namely the failure to discriminate between the two, or, to put it more specifically, the absence of a third knowledge rightly indicating the real difference between the right perception and the right recollection. But the absence of this third knowledge is to be understood simply as *the absence of a knowledge* and nothing more than that. There is thus nothing that can be positively viewed as false knowledge—not even as resulting from any actual fusion of perception and recollection. The perception remains a perception and the recollection remains a recollection; there would have been nothing wrong about the experience in its totality only if there were the awareness of the actual difference between the two.

This, argues Prabhakara, is further proved by the way in which the socalled false knowledge is eventually cancelled or rejected. When the perception-recollection complex in the form of 'this is silver' is eventually corrected, what actually takes place is the new awareness of the difference between the perception of the shell as the 'this' and the recollection of the silver as silver. The perception part of it remains as before, and so does the recollection part. There is no question at all of one right knowledge rejecting one false knowledge, and hence there is no question either of proving the unreality of the objects of any of the components. The shell perceived in bare outline as the presented 'this' remains as firmly true as ever, and so also the silver that was actually perceived in the past and remembered later. The dawn of the awareness of the difference between the two pieces of knowledge tampers neither with the truth of any of these two nor with the reality of their respective objects.

Thus there is really nothing called illusory experience and as such it is useless for the idealists to try to prove

the illusoriness of the world on the evidence of the common illusions.

Agreeing fully with Prabhakara on the need of analysing the illusory experience into its component parts and agreeing further with him that the objects indicated by illusions are by no means themselves illusory or unreal, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas strongly differ from him in denying the facthood of the illusory experience. As against Prabhakara they argue that the illusory experience—in the sense of a single though complex one—is a fact. But the admission of this does in no way affect the reality of the object thereof.

One of the main points of their arguments against Prabhakara is the evidence of practical reaction provoked by the illusory experience. On seeing a snake in a rope one runs away from it; on seeing silver in a shell one runs after it. Such reactions indicate that one has the actual experience of snake or silver. The mere absence of knowledge—namely between the perception of something as barely 'this' and the recollection of something else previously perceived as snake or silver—cannot account for the practical reactions referred to. One acts on the basis of experience or knowledge. The mere absence of a discriminating knowledge between two experiences—being itself something negative or nonexisting—can by no means provoke positive activity, as is in fact done by the illusory experience. Of course, the followers of Prabhakara want to argue that even the mere absence of knowledge can be a source of positive activity. But such a position is precarious for an opponent of idealism, for it is almost stepping into the trap of idealism. The absence of knowledge simply means ignorance, and it is a pet thesis of the idealist that ignorance is the source of practical activities, or that practical activities can be explained on the basis of ignorance alone.

Discarding the theory of Prabhakara mainly on this ground, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas argue that the fact of illusory experience can never be doubted. In the common

illusions under consideration, one actually perceives a snake or a piece of silver. But this is apparenly the point also argued by the Advaita Vedantists against the Sunyavadins: the snake or silver cannot be explained away as pure fiction, because the fact is that in illusion these are actually perceived. However nothing is more remote than this from what the Nyaya-Vaisesikas want to prove by the positive experience of the snake or silver in illusion. The Vedantists claim that the actual experience of the snake or silver in illusion is explicable only on the assumption of the actual production of some inexplicable snake or silver for the time being. This, argue the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, is palpably absurd, because nothing can be produced without the well-known or empirically verifiable material causes thereof. In default of such material causes for the production of any snake or silver in the cases of illusion, it makes no sense to say that some mysterious snake or silver is actually produced for the time being. The only material cause for the 'indescribable' snake or silver mentioned by the Advaita philosophers is ignorance or *avidya*. This again is absurd. First, there is no proof at all for this ignorance or *avidya*. Secondly, the material cause of something has basically to be of the same nature as itself: earthen jars can be produced only from earth and never from gold. But ignorance has absolutely no basic similarity with the snake or silver, and hence can by no means be considered as their material cause. Thirdly, even assuming that ignorance is the material cause of the snake or silver, it remains totally inexplicable why in certain cases it produces only the 'indescribable' snake and not the silver, while in certain other cases it produces only the 'indescribable' silver and not the snake.[37] In short, the Advaita Vedantist starts from an ostensibly right premise, namely the positive experience of the snake or silver in illusion, though only to lead us into the mire of mystery-mongering.

37. *Ib.* vi.173.

Rejecting thus the suggestions of both Prabhakara and the Advaita Vedantists, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas want to show that it is as impermissible to deny the fact of illusory experience as to denude its object of reality. The fact is that you do perceive snake in rope or silver in shell. But this does not by any means imply the illusoriness or unreality of the snake and silver, far less that of the rope and the shell.

To begin with, as we have already seen the Nyaya-Vaisesikas argue that there is an objective coercion in the common cases of illusion: you can see a snake *only* in the presence of the rope and never in the presence of the shell, just as you can see the silver *only* in the presence of the shell and never in the presence of the rope. There is thus something in the objective world—something actually present before you—which dictates terms to the illusion, or, more precisely, to its specific form. Of course this something is not fully or adequately known. It is known only in bare outlines, something as merely 'this'.

As far as the knowledge of *this* is concerned, it is perception, though an inadequate one. Its inadequacy notwithstanding, there is nothing illusory about it. The illusion consists in experiencing this something as something else, i.e. something which is not there. But the point sought to be specially emphasised by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas is that though it is not 'there—i.e. not before one who has the illusory experience—it is wrong to think that it exists nowhere and in no time. The snake that you see in the rope is obviously not in front of you when you see it: but it certainly exists elsewhere and at a different time—say, in the jungle and in the past when you did really see it. A person who in the past has never seen a real snake anywhere in the real world is incapable of seeing a snake in the rope in front of him. Like the rope itself, the snake too is a real snake, though existing at a different time and in a different place. Illusion, in other words, is the 'false knowledge' (*khyati*) of an object existing 'elsewhere and elsewhen' (*anyatha*). The theory is called *anyatha-*

khyati, or alternatively *viparita-khyati*, literally 'the false knowledge of something as something else'.

The crucial problem involved in such a theory of illusion must not be overlooked. In the rope you actually *see* a snake; in the shell you actually *see* silver. If therefore the snake exists in the past and in the jungle or if the silver actually exists in the past and in the market—how can you, during your present illusion, really *see* it? In other words, there is a perceptual experience of the object of illusion. But such an experience presupposes a direct sense-object contact. When the visual sense is in actual contact with the rope, there is direct perception of the rope. But how can there be such a contact if the object experienced belongs to some different place and time? How can there be the contact of your visual sense with a snake supposed to exist in the jungle and in the past? How, again, can there be the contact of your visual sense with the silver said to exist in the market?

The Nyaya-Vaisesikas—or, more specifically, the later followers of this philosophy—attempt a psychological explanation of this phenomenon. When you are in the presense of a rope, certain general features of this rope actually perceived recall certain general features of the snake previously perceived. This past knowledge as remembered itself serves to establish an extraordinary form of contact between your visual sense and the snake belonging to a different place-time context. In ordinary cases the visual sense is directly in contact with the object. Under extraordinary circumstances, however a previous knowledge does establish a special and mediate form of contact between the sense and the object. It is called *jnana-laksana-sannikarsa*. That such a special or extraordinary type of sense-object contact is a fact can be seen from other experiences also. For example, you have experiences like: 'the sandalwood *looks* fragrant' or 'the ice *looks* cold'. In these cases, there is the direct contact of the visual sense only with the visible form of sandalwood or ice. But the previous knowledge of fragrance

in the former and of cold in the latter serves to establish some sort of extraordinary contact between the visual sense and the fragrance or cold, which are perceived.

Kumarila, though sharing the basic features of the Nyaya-Vaisesika theory of *anyatha-khyati* (or *viparita-khyati*), has a comparatively simpler solution of the problem. The illusory experience, according to him, is not a case of direct perception at all; it is instead a case of the wrong fusion of perception and memory—the perception of something as 'this' fused with the memory of something perceived in the past and in a different place. Both the things perceived as well as remembered are real entities belonging to the external or real world no doubt; as such there is no question of proving the illusoriness of the objects of illusory experience. The illusion consists simply in the wrong fusion or wrong amalgamation of two independent pieces of right knowledge, one of which is perceptual and the other of the nature of recollection.

Comparatively simple though such an explanation is, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas do not accept it, for they find it inadequate to account for the full facts about illusory experience. One of these facts is the way in which the illusory experience is later remembered, particularly after its correction. The recollection of the experience of the common illusions, argue the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, assumes the form 'I *saw* a snake' or I *saw* silver', and never the form 'I *remembered* a snake' or 'I *remembered* silver'. This recollection, in other words, is distinctly the recollection of a perceptual experience, and hence prove that the illusory experience itself must have been of the nature of perception, which Kumarila overlooks.

Such then are the two main theories of illusion worked out from the standpoint of the antithesis of idealism—*a-khyati* of Prabhakara and *anyatha-khyati* of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas. In later Indian philosophy there is a great deal of debate among the opponents of idealism themselves over the comparative merits of these two theories. But

that must not lead us to overlook some of the important points on which both are agreed. For example, the common cases of illusion like seeing silver in shell are, according to both these theories, complex forms of experience involving three factors. In the view of Prabhakara, these three are: (1) the actual perception of something real, e.g. of the shell, though in its bare outlines as the merely 'this'; (2) because of the broad similarity between this something perceived with something else previously perceived in a different place, the recollection of the latter; (3) the lack of any awareness of the difference between the two.

In the Nyaya-Vaisesika view also, three factors are involved in the common cases of illusion, and, of these, the first two are practically the same as admitted by Prabhakara. Where it strongly differs from Prabhakara's view is on the nature of the third factor, which according to the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, is the actual perception of the thing experienced in the past and in a different place. In spite of this difference—the importance of which, incidentally, is in no way to be undermined—the two fully agree on the objective reality of the shell inadequately but actually perceived as well as of the silver previously perceived in a different place. Both are real material things of the real world, having nothing illusory about them. A great deal of emphasis is laid in the two theories on this point, because this is intended to show that there is actually no hope for the idealist to prove that the material world, in spite of being directly experienced, is totally unreal on the ground that the totally unreal can as well be directly experienced, as evidenced by the common cases of illusion. Even illusion does not show the actual experience of the unreal.

8. Practice, the Criterion of Truth

The theory of illusion of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas is thus not free from difficulties of its own. But there is another important point to be noted in this connection. The zeal

to refute idealism which leads them to this theory enables them also to develop an epistemological position which retains a great deal of significance for the philosophical controversies going on in our times. This position, in short, is that practice is the criterion of truth.

Before passing on to see its implications for the epistemological questions still being hotly debated, let us try to be clear about the specific Indian context in which it is argued by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas.

What is the typical technique by which the Indian idealists hope to evade the recurring difficulties of their own position? It is the distinction they make between the purely provisional truth of practical life and the ultimate truth of philosophical wisdom. With this they feel fortified against the flat absurdities of their theory of illusion as well as of the damnation of logic.

Thus, like the snake seen in the rope, the snake seen in the snake is also an illusion. Still the idealists want to justify taking practical precautions against the latter, because it is supposed to have the purely provisional truth of the practical life, which is ultimately a form of illusion of course. Similarly, though logic—or more broadly the sources of right knowledge like experience and reason (*pramana*-s)—is really without any validity of its own, the idealists feel justified to prove their own case with the help of logic itself, because while they do it they accept the validity of logic for practical purposes only. As Candrakirti says, the use of the logical canons by the idealist is not inspired by his personal conviction but by that of the common people who are to be disillusioned. The socalled *pramana*-s used by him have no validity from his own standpoint; but they have value for convincing others who believe in them. In other words, though without any validity from the standpoint of the ultimate truth, they have some sort of provisional validity for practical purposes only.

The Nyaya-Vaisesikas claim that practice is the real cri-

terion of truth shows that all this is at best empty sophistry.

First, how do the idealists hope to prove their case for irrationalism? How, in other words, do they try to prove that no *pramana* has validity? We have already seen one of the famous arguments of Nagarjuna for this. A *pramana*, in order to be valid, has to depend for its validity on something else, which in its turn has to depend for its own validity on still something else—and so on without an end.

Vatsyayana opens his commentary on the *Nyaya-sutra* with a pointed refutation of such an argument—a refutation that has far-reaching implications for Indian epistemology, inasmuch as it calls also for the rejection of the idealist theory of 'two truths'. But the way in which he puts it is very cryptic. Before quoting what he says, it is necessary to have some clarifications.

To begin with, what exactly is meant by the validity of a *pramana*? What is the precondition to be fulfilled by normal reason and experience in order to establish their credentials as sources of right knowledge? A source of knowledge is expected to give us some knowledge or some information. But an information is essentially an information about something, it being meaningless to imagine of an information informing us of nothing. This information is to be considered correct—and hence its source valid—only in so far as what is informed by it is true. An awareness is essentially an awareness of some object (*artha*). In so far as the awareness is an exact reflection of the object—or has an exact correspondence with the object—it is right or correct. Therefore the source or instrument of knowledge has validity only when the object indicated by the knowledge—and hence ultimately by its source—is really so and never otherwise. The validity of a *pramana* means nothing else than its invariable relation to the object indicated by it. If the object and its nature as indicated by some awareness—and therefore by its source—are different from what these actually are, the source of

awareness is to be considered a pseudo-*pramana* and not a *pramana*. A pseudo-*pramana* indicates a snake where there is only a rope. When, however, perception or experience indicates only a rope where there is an actual rope and only a snake where there is an actual snake, it is to be accepted as a *pramana*.

In Indian terminology, an instrument of knowledge being valid simply means that it is *arthavat*, i.e. invariably connected with the object indicated by it. Therefore the question of *proving* the validity of an instrument of knowledge resolves itself to a simpler one. Is there any possibility of proving that an instrument of knowledge is *arthavat*? If there is such a possibility, we are to reject the claim that the validity of the instrument of knowledge can never be established. Vatsyayana opens his philosophical work with the assertion that there is certainly a way of proving this, that there is a definite criterion to establish whether a source of knowledge is invariably connected with the object indicated by it. And this criterion is nothing but the practical success of knowledge itself. When knowledge proves successful in practical life, its source is to be accepted as valid, i.e. as really and invariably connected with the object indicated by it.

Put in Indian terminology, Vatsyayana's argument is: *pramanam arthavat, pravrttisamarthyat*.

It means, 'the source of right knowledge' (*pramana*) is 'invariably connected with the object indicated by it' (*arthavat*), 'because of the successful activity resulting from it' (*pravrtti-samarthyat*). Thus is proved the validity of the sources of valid knowledge.

A few words may be useful here for clarifying what Vatsyayana means by 'successful activity' or *samartha-pravrtti*. An instrument of knowledge does not directly lead to successful activity. It gives us only the knowledge of the object. This object is considered either desirable or undesirable and accordingly arises the desire to seek or shun it. This leads to the activity aimed at either attaining or avoiding the object, which, in its turn, results in the

actual attainment or avoidance of the object. In this way, *pramana* leads to successful activity. An awareness failing to lead to a successful activity in the form of attaining or avoiding the object cannot be true, and hence the instrument giving the knowledge is not valid. In Indian terminology, it is a pseudo-*pramana* and not a *pramana.*

With these preliminaries over, we may now see the philosophical manifesto with which Vatsyayana opens his work:

Successful activity results when the object of knowledge is known by an instrument of valid knowledge. Hence the instrument of valid knowledge is invariably connected with the object.

There is no right knowledge of object, without the instrument of valid knowledge. Without the right knowledge of object, there is no successful activity. On being aware of the object with the instrument of valid knowledge, the knower wants either to get it or avoid it. His specific effort (*samiha*), prompted by the desire of either getting or avoiding the object, is called activity (*pravrtti*), whose success (*samarthya*), again, lies in its invariable connection with the result. One who thus exerts, being desirous of getting or avoiding the object, either gets it or avoids it. By object is meant pleasure as well as its cause, and suffering as well as its cause. These objects of the instruments of valid knowledge are innumerable, because the species of living beings are innumerable.

The whole thing is designed to prove mainly one point. There is a sure criterion for establishing the truth of knowledge and therefore the validity of its source. This is practice. If in practice the knowledge leads to some successful result, it is to be accepted as true, and hence its source valid. If, on the other hand, an awareness fails to lead to such a practical success, it is to be discarded as false and hence its source invalid—this source is only a pseudo-*pramana* and not a *pramana.* The awareness of water in mirage is ascertained to be false, because it cannot lead one to quench thirst. It is produced by *pramanabhasa* or pseudo-*pramana.* The knowledge of water in a pool, by contrast, is ascertained to be true, because it leads

to the successful quenching of thirst. Such a knowledge is thus produced by a *pramana,* a valid source of knowledge.

The Indian way of expressing an argument like this is to give it the form of an inference (*anumana*): from the success in practice of a knowledge is inferred the validity of its instrument. Therefore, following the line of Nagarjuna's argument, it can be easily objected that since the validity of *pramana* is sought to be established with the help of an inference, how is to be established the validity of this inference itself? Is it to be done with the help of another inference? But, then, to establish the validity of this other inference a further inference is to be called for. And so on for every subsequent inference, without an end.

All this, from the Nyaya-Vaisesika standpoint, is only empty sophistry. It is not necessary to establish the validity of any and every inference. The need of ascertaining the validity of an inference is felt only where there is doubt as to its validity. However there are many well-known cases where a doubt is not felt at all. As Phanibhusana says, on coming across an unsigned letter, for example, one infers without the least doubt a writer thereof. It is not a mark of sanity to insist that there is doubt even in such an inference. So is the case of the inference of the validity of a knowledge and its source, even after the knowledge results in successful activity. Even after actually quenching thirst with the water seen in a pool, is it a mark of sanity to doubt the validity of the knowledge of water merely on the ground that this proof, as expressed in logical terminology, is inferential after all? In short, after a knowledge is proved true in practice, there remains no doubt about the proof; hence the question of proving the proof does not arise.

With these clarifications, Jayanta Bhatta,[38] a later representative of the Nyaya-Vaisesika, restates the position of Vatsyayana:

38. Jayanta Bhatta *NM* i.158-59.

At the time when an awareness leads you to go in for an action you are certainly not sure that this awareness is valid. Thus, for example, the mere awareness of something blue is not at the same time an assurance that this awareness is true. You may, of course, eventually become sure that the awareness you had was true. Such an assurance, however, is not an automatic process, for in its own turn it depends on *pravrtti-samarthya* (successful activity) . . .

But, it will be asked, what is this *pravrtti-samarthya* on which, according to the Naiyayikas, depends the assurance of the truth of a knowledge? To this we reply: Vatsyayana himself says that *pravrtti* stands for a specific effort and *samarthya* for this effort proving successful in practice. This means that by *pravrtti-samarthya* he means the knowledge of result in the form of an effective action.

However, it will be asked again, how is this knowledge of effective action different from the original knowledge, the truth of which was yet to be ascertained? And if the former—i.e. the knowledge of effective action itself—requires another knowledge to assure you of its truth, there will evidently be a vicious infinite regress.

To this we reply that such an objection is incoherent, inasmuch as it goes against the supreme verdict of experience. The reason for this is that the knowledge of effective action is in no need of being itself tested. The awareness that leads you to go in for an action can do so without assuring you of its truth. But the knowledge of effective action does not require that its truth is in need of being tested, because its very attainment means the fulfilment of the purpose concerned. Hence in this case is ruled out the possibility of the vicious infinite regress.

To put the point in another way: The latter knowledge (i.e. of effective action) is not in need of being tested, because there is never any doubt about it. (But there is doubt about and therefore also the need for testing the truth of) the original awareness that leads you to go in for an action, because it has often for its object something nonexistent. Thus, for example, you may have the awareness of water in the presence of the sunrays. That is why people have doubt about the truth of an awareness that originally leads one to go in for an action. But the knowledge of effective action in relation to water never takes place except in the actual presence of water. That is why,

none can have any doubt about the truth of this type of knowledge. Therefore there is no occasion for any enquiry into the truth of the knowledge of effective action, for all enquiry presupposes doubt.

This may as well be put as follows. The knowledge of effective action has this characteristic peculiarity that it by itself assures one of its own truth. What, it will be asked, is this peculiarity? To this we reply as follows. Various purposes can be served by water: you may clean yourself with it, drink it, bathe in it, offer it to gods and manes, wash your clothes with it, relieve yourself of exhaustion or heat and so on. But none of these purposes is served for one who is led to an action by false awareness (e.g. of water in mirage). Such purposes, when served in real practical life, the knowledge of this practical success carries the truth of its own assurance.

It may be objected that purposes like these are found to be served even in dream. To this we reply that a waking man has the clear consciousness in the form: 'I am now awake and am not dreaming.' As accompanied by such consciousness, the purposes in question are never served except in the actual presence of water.

9. Theory and Practice

The last point raised and answered by Jayanta Bhatta brings us back to what we have seen over and over again. It is the appeal of the Indian idealists ultimately to the evidence of the patently false experiences, like dreams and illusions. As against the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, the idealists argue that practice cannot be the criterion of truth of an awareness—and, therefore, practical success cannot be the guarantee for any objective reality—inasmuch as even dream-experience, which is admittedly false, can lead to success in practical life. Not that the idealists claim that all dream-experiences stand the test of practice or that the objects of all dream-experiences lead to the attainment of the results expected of such objects in practical life. As a generalised claim, this is plain nonsense. You can no more bathe in dream water than become rich simply by dreaming of gold. From the idealist's standpoint, however,

it is not necessary to substantiate such a generalised claim for the purpose of refuting the Nyaya-Vaisesika position that practice is the criterion of truth. For the philosophical refutation of this what is needed for the idealist is at least one example of a dream-experience leading to practical success so that the Nyaya-Vaisesikas are prevented from generalising that practice is the criterion of truth.

It appears that Vasubandhu actually argues on this line. What he wants to show is that at least in certain cases practical success in its full physical sense can as well result from admittedly false experiences of phantom-objects. What, then, are such exceptional cases? As a typical one, Vasubandhu mentions the case of dream-pollution. One dreams of having coition with a woman and has actual ejaculation. The woman thus dreamt of, being physically absent for the dreamer, is after all only a phantom—a patently illusory object. And yet it can lead to the same practical success which an actual woman of flesh and blood leads to. This practical success is the seminal discharge in its full physical sense. As Vasubandhu's point is put with rather academic politeness: "As for the performance of physical acts, it does not also presuppose the existence of actual objects. The experience of sexual commerce and the discharge of seminal fluid though there is no actual contact between persons of different sexes, can be cited as an instance in support."[39]

Whether such a claim is really answered by Jayanta Bhatta's argument—whether the characteristic peculiarity of the consciousness accompanying the actual waking coition is absent in the case of ejaculation in pollution dream—is perhaps a question that will be unfair to ask the monk philosopher like Vasubandhu to answer. Nevertheless it seems that already before Jayanta Bhatta, Subhagupta[40] argues against Vasubandhu on this point. "As to the argument of sexual behaviour in dream", says he,

39. NNMRP i.371-72. 40. Subhagupta *BS* 131.

"we answer: The attainment of full sexual pleasure does not necessarily coexist with pollution dream; how can there be an attainment of the object sought, viz the full sexual pleasure, in the case of mere pollution?"

All this is reminiscent of what Feuerbach said against the idealist, that to identify subjective sensation with the objective world "is to identify pollution with procreation".[41] Lenin,[42] quotes this comment of Feuerbach, and observes:

A comment not of the politest order, but it hits the vital spot of those philosophers who teach that sense-perception is the reality existing outside us.

The standpoint of life, of practice, should be first and fundamental in the theory of knowledge. And it inevitably leads to materialism, sweeping aside the endless fabrications of professorial scholasticism. Of course, we must not forget that the criterion of practice can never, in the nature of things, either confirm or refute any human idea *completely*. This criterion too is sufficiently 'indefinite' not to allow human knowledge to become 'absolute', but at the same time it is sufficiently definite to wage a ruthless fight on all varieties of idealism and agnosticism. If what our practice confirms is the sole, ultimate and objective truth, then from this must follow the recognition that the only path to this truth is the path of science, which holds the materialist point of view.

In this connection, Lenin's discussion of "The Criterion of Practice in the Theory of Knowledge"[43] needs to be read in full. That will give us a more adequate idea of how our Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophers, in their struggle against idealism, brilliantly anticipate an epistemological position which contains the potentials for the rejection of idealism, making room for science and materialism. We shall presently quote Lenin again to see more of this. Lest, however, we commit the error of imputing to the Nyaya-Vaisesikas a philosophical position that is more revolutionary than is historically possible for them to work out, we have to

41. Lenin MEC 129. 42. *Ib.* 43. *Ib.* 124ff.

note here also the limitation of their view of practice, i.e. from the standpoint of its contemporary understanding initiated by Marx.

To begin with let us note a simple point. The admission of practice as the criterion of truth entails the assertion that the manual workers—engaged as they are to the practical intercourse with nature more than anybody else in society—are much more favourably placed for knowing nature than mere theoreticians with all their hair-splittting arguments. Not that the importance of mental labour or theoretical activity as such is to be undermined. What is called for is the rejection of the pretentious claim of pure reason justifying itself with a contempt for manual labour and rejecting its relevance for philosophical purposes. Within the *varnasrama* or caste-oriented society based on the damnation of the manual workers such an assertion is sure to be heavily censored. In any case the Nyaya-Vaisesikas do not draw such a corollary from their own view of practice, though of all the Indian philosophers they give us the impression of persistently drawing on the experience of various crafts for the purpose of enriching their own understanding of nature.

Interestingly this assertion that the manual worker is more favourably placed for the understanding of nature than the bare theoretician, is, as we have seen, much nearer the spirit of the early Vedic poets. They are *instinctively* committed to the standpoint of the primordial complex of wisdom and action, and therefore, far from cultivating any contempt for manual work, extol it, though inevitably in their own primitive way.[44] But what is it that ensures for them such an outlook, howsoever naively understood? It is the society in which they live—a society not yet split into a leisured minority and a toiling majority. Because of the extremely rudimentary control over nature then acquired, their community can survive on the strength of the collective labour of all its members. For

44. See Ch. 4, Sec 9.

them, therefore, wisdom can mean practically nothing in so far as it is not also a guide to action.

With the development of the technique of production, when human labour acquires the capacity of producing much more than is necessary for the bare maintenance of the labourer, the tribal organisations of the early Vedic period are historically destined to disintegrate. And with it is destined to be undermined the primordial complex of wisdom and action. We have already seen how the Upanisads—the ending parts of Veda—describe the shift in the basic attitude of the dominant section of the thinkers of the new age. Thought, now separated from action, becomes the private possession of a fortunate few and it results in the idealist outlook, which as we have seen wants repeatedly to invade the consciousness of the Indian philosophers in so far as they are actually removed from active intercourse with nature.

In this context we can now see the importance as well as the limitations of the Nyaya-Vaisesika view of practice. In the Indian struggle against philosophical idealism, the claim that practice itself is the criterion of truth is extremely important from the epistemological point of view. But it is no more revolutionary than its actual historical context permits it to be. If the ultimate basis of the idealist outlook is the parasitical consciousness of the privileged minority of the class-divided society, its full and final overthrow presupposes the overthrow of the class-structure of society itself. As Marx and Engels, in their first full draft of Marxism, formulate their new understanding of history, inclusive of the historical destiny of idealism: "It does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice; and accordingly it comes to the conclusion that all forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism . . . *but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gave rise to this idealistic humbug*; that not criticism but revolution is the driving force of history, also of religion, of philosophy and all

other types of theory."[45] Accordingly, as is well-known, Marx concludes his *Theses on Feuerbach* with the following: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."

All this is insisting on the criterion of practice, but practice in a sense that is historically premature for any philosopher of ancient or medieval period to anticipate. Our Nyaya-Vaisesikas show no awareness of the actual social roots of philosophical idealism and hence they do not talk of the revolutionary overthrow of the class-structure of society as ensuring the material conditions for the final overthrow of philosophical idealism. Nor, for obvious historical reasons, do we expect them to take such a position.

But this does not mean that we can in any way underestimate the epistemological importance of the stand they take. The insistence on practice as the criterion of truth implies the annihilation—as far as it is epistemologically possible—of the theory of 'two truths', the ultimate refuge for all the idealists.

Before passing on to see this in the specific Indian context, we may quote Lenin to see how in recent European philosophy also the idealists and crypto-idealists try to evade the glaring inconsistency of their theory with the verdict of practice by taking recourse to the distinction between two truths—the philosophical or 'scientific' truth and the truth of the vulgar practical life—and how the criterion of practice in the theory of knowledge actually debunks this idealist subterfuge. Observes Lenin[46]:

We have seen that Marx in 1845 and Engels in 1888 and 1892 placed the criterion of practice at the basis of the materialist theory of knowledge. "The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question", says Marx in his second thesis on Feuerbach. The best refutation of Kantian and Humean agnosticism as well as of other philosophical

45. Marx & Engels GI 50. 46. Lenin MEC 124ff.

crotchets (*Schrullen*) is practice, repeats Engels. "The success of our action proves the conformity (*Uebereinstimmung*) of our perceptions with the objective nature of the things perceived", he says in reply to the agnostics.

Compare this with Mach's argument about the criterion of practice: "In the common way of thinking and speaking *appearance, illusion,* is usually contrasted with *reality.* A pencil held in front of us in the air is seen as straight; when we dip it slantwise into water we see it as crooked. In the latter case we say that the pencil *appears crooked* but in reality it is straight. But what entitles us to declare *one* fact to be the reality, and to degrade the *other* to an appearance?... Our expectation, of course, is deceived when we fall into the natural error of expecting what we are accustomed to although the case is unusual. The facts are not to blame for that. In these cases, to speak of *appearance* may have a *practical significance, but not a scientific significance.* Similarly, the question which is often asked, whether the world is real or whether we merely dream it, is devoid of all scientific significance. Even the wildest dream is a fact as much as any others" (*Analysis of Sensations,* pp 18-19).

It is true that not only is the wildest dream a fact, but also the wildest philosophy. It is impossible to doubt this after an acquaintance with the philosophy of Ernst Mach. As the very latest sophist, he confounds the scientific-historical and psychological investigation of human errors, of every "wild dream" of humanity, such as belief in sprites, hobgoblins, and so forth, with the epistemological distinction between truth and "wildness"...

And a twisted professorial idealism it is, indeed, when the criterion of practice, which for every one of us distinguishes illusion from reality, is removed by Mach from the realm of science, from the realm of the theory of knowledge. Human practice proves the correctness of the materialist theory of knowledge, said Marx and Engels, who dubbed attempts to solve the fundamental question of epistemology without the aid of practice "scholastic" and "philosophical crotchets". But for Mach practice is one thing and the theory of knowledge something quite different; they can be placed side by side without making the latter conditional on the former... For the materialist the "success" of human practice proves the correspondence between our ideas and the objective nature of the things we perceive.

For the solipsist "success" is everything needed *by me in practice,* which can be regarded separately from the theory of knowledge. If we include the criterion of practice in the foundation of the theory of knowledge we inevitably arrive at materialism, says the Marxist. Let practice be materialist, says Mach, but theory is another matter.

"In practice", Mach writes in the *Analysis of Sensations,* "we can as little do without the idea of the *self* when we perform any act, as we can do without the idea of a body when we grasp at a thing. Physiologically we remain egoists and materialists with the same constancy as we forever see the sun rising again. But theoretically this view cannot be adhered to" (284-85).

Egoism is beside the point here, for egoism is not an epistemological category. The question of the apparent movement of the sun around the earth is also beside the point, for in practice, which serves us as a criterion in the theory of knowledge, we must include also the practice of astronomical observations, discoveries, etc. There remains only Mach's valuable admission that in their practical life men are entirely and exclusively guided by the materialist theory of knowledge; the attempt to obviate it "theoretically" is characteristic of Mach's *gelehrte* scholastic and twisted idealistic endeavours.

How little of a novelty are these efforts to eliminate practice—as something unsusceptible to epistemological treatment—in order to make room for agnosticism and idealism is shown by the following example from the history of German classical philosophy. Between Kant and Fichte stands G. E. Schulze (known in the history of philosophy as Schulze-Aenesidemus). He openly advocates the sceptical trend in philosophy and calls himself a follower of Hume (and of the ancients Pyrrho and Sextus). He emphatically rejects every thing-in-itself and the possibility of objective knowledge, and emphatically insists that we should not go beyond "experience", beyond sensations in which connection he anticipates the following objection from the other camp: "Since the sceptic when he takes part in the affairs of life assumes as indubitable the reality of objective things, behaves accordingly, and thus admits a criterion of truth, his own behaviour is the best and clearest refutation of his scepticism." "Such proofs", Schulze indignantly retorts, "are only valid for the mob (*Poebel*)." For "my scepticism does not concern

the requirements of practical life, but remains within the bounds of philosophy" (S.254,255).

In similar manner, the subjective idealist Fichte also hopes to find room within the bounds of idealistic philosophy for that "realism which is inevitable (*sich aufdringt*) for all of us, and even for the most determined idealist, when it comes to action, i.e., the assumption that objects exist quite independently of us and outside us" (*Werke*, I, 455). . . . Feuerbach also, like Marx and Engels, makes an impermissible—from the point of view of Schulze, Fichte and Mach—"leap" to practice in the fundamental problems of epistemology. Criticising idealism, Feuerbach explains its essential nature by the following striking quotation from Fichte, which superbly demolishes Machism: " 'You assume', writes Fichte, 'that things are real, that they exist outside of you, only because you see them, hear them and touch them. But vision, touch and hearing are only sensations. . . . You perceive, not the objects, but only your sensations,' " (Feuerbach, *Werke*, X. Band, S. 185). To which Feuerbach replies that a human being is not an abstract I, but either a man or woman, and the question whether the world is sensation can be compared to the question: is another human being my sensation, or do our relations in practical life prove the contrary? "The fundamental defect of idealism is precisely that it asks and answers the question of objectivity and subjectivity, of the reality or unreality of the world, only from the standpoint of theory" (ibid., 189). Feuerbach makes the sum-total of human practice the basis of the theory of knowledge. He says that idealists of course also recognise the reality of the I and the Thou in practical life. For the idealists "this point of view is valid only for practical life and not for speculation. But a speculation which contradicts life, which makes the standpoint of death, of a soul separated from the body, the standpoint of truth, is a dead and false speculation" (192). Before we *perceive*, we breathe; we cannot exist without air, food and drink.

"Does this mean then that we must deal with questions of food and drink when examining the problem of the ideality or reality of the world?—exclaims the indignant idealist. How vile! What an offence against good manners soundly to trounce materialism in the scientific sense from the chair of philosophy and the pulpit of theology, only to practise materialism with all one's heart and soul in the crudest form at the table d'hote" (195).

10. Theory of "Two Truths"

We have quoted Lenin at some length because the passage enables us to see profound epistemological significance of the Nyaya-Vaisesika position even for the controversies going on in our times. The theory of 'two truths' is not an innovation of the Indian idealists alone. The idealist philosophers in Europe, when confronted with the glaring absurdities of the idealist outlook from the standpoint of their own behaviour, take recourse precisely to the same distinction betweeen what appears to be true from the standpoint of mere practical life and what is established as true on the basis of their own metaphysical analysis. The most telling refutation of all this is the insistence on practice as the criterion of truth, as it is done by Lenin in European philosophy and in their own way also by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas in traditional Indian philosophy. But let us confine ourselves mainlv to the Indian context of the refutation of idealism.

The Nyaya-Vaisesika claim that practice is the criterion of truth is intended primarily to defend the normal sources of knowledge—particularly experience and reason—against the persistent efforts of the idealists to condemn them. But its implications for the refutation of idealism are far-reaching, especially the idealist crochet of the 'two truths', viz the ultimate truth or *paramarthika-satya* and the purely provisional truth called forth by the vulgar exigencies of practical life—*samvrti-satya* or *vyavaharika-satya*.

If from the standpoint of the antithesis of idealism, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas thus remove the very foundation of the idealist theory of 'two truths', Kumarila wants to determine the exact logical worth of this theory. And the answer he arrives at is remarkable. From the standpoint of logical consistency, the worth of this theory is of course nil. But this does not mean that it has no worth from the standpoint of Indian idealism. What, then, is this worth? It serves, says Kumarila, the important purpose of hoax-

ing the people with a pedantic pretence, so that they can be prevented from seeing the raw absurdities of the world-denying outlook. It is impossible to retain in English translation the biting satire of Kumarila's terse verses. Here are, however, some of his main points:[47]

The idealist talks of some 'apparent truth' or 'provisional truth of practical life', i.e. in his terminology, of *samvrti-satya.*

However, since in his own view, there is really no truth in this 'apparent truth', what is the sense of asking us to look at it as some special brand of truth as it were?

If there is truth in it, why call it false at all? And, if it is really false, why call it a kind of truth?

Truth and falsehood, being mutually exclusive, there cannot be any factor called 'truth' as belonging in common to both—no more than there can be any common factor called 'treeness' belonging to both the tree and the lion, which are mutually exclusive.

On the idealist's own assumption, this 'apparent truth' is nothing but a synonym for the 'false'. Why, then, does he use this expression? Because it serves for him a very important purpose. It is the purpose of a verbal hoax. It means falsity, though with such a pedantic air about it as to suggest something apparently different, as it were. This is in fact a well-known trick. Thus, to create a pedantic air. one can use the word *vaktrasava* (lit. mouth-wine) instead of the simpler word *lala*, meaning saliva. (*vancanartha upanyaso lala-vaktrasavadivat*).

But why is this pedantic air? Why, instead of simply talking of falsity, is the verbal hoax of an 'apparent truth' or *samvrti?* The purpose of conceiving this *samvrti* is only to conceal the absurdity of the theory of the nothingness of the objective world, so that it can somehow be explained why things are imagined as actually existing when they are not so.

Instead of playing such verbal tricks, therefore, one should speak honestly. This means: one should admit that what does not exist, exists not; and what does exist, exists in the full sense. The latter alone is true and the former false. But the idealist cannot just afford to admit this. He is obliged instead to talk of *two truths,* senseless though this be.

47. Kumarila *SV* niralambana-vada 6-10.

Kumarila opens his refutation of idealism with this rejection of the theory of 'two truths', while Gotama, as we have seen, does it with the defence of the normal sources of knowledge. The two procedures are interconnected, and Kumarila himself draws our attention to it. With a few words on this, we may sum up the present discussion.

In defence of reason and experience, Gotama argues that even the idealist, for the purpose of proving his own philosophical position, has to rely on them while theoretically rejecting their trustworthiness. As against this, the ultimate defence of the idealist is his theory of 'two truths': reason and experience, though ultimately false, are nevertheless true from the practical point of view. Whether, historically speaking, such a defence is worked out after Gotama is a difficult question, into which we need not digress here. In Gotama's *Nyaya-sutra*, we do not read any pointed refutation of the theory of 'two truths'. From the standpoint of the antithesis of idealism, therefore, it is highly significant that Kumarila, on the basis of his rejection of the 'two truths', continues Gotama's argument, even méntioning him by name. As against Gotama's criticism, he shows the idealist can try many manoeuvres; but his ultimate refuge can only be the theory of 'two truths', which, in its turn, has no more than a merely verbal worth.

We give below some of the more important points of Kumarila:[48]

In self-defence, the idealist claims that he uses proofs or *pramana*-s in favour of his own position not because he is personally convinced of their trustworthiness, but simply because others—whom he wants to convince—are so. This would have perhaps made some sense if the results aimed at were only the disillusionment of an opponent already under the influence of counterproofs. In that case, the idealist could show him the futility of the opponent's position in terms of the opponent himself, without in any way sharing the conviction in the effectiveness of these proofs.

48. *Ib.* 142-168.

But the matter is not really as simple as that. When the idealist asserts that ideas alone are real, he is likely to be asked by some honest inquirer, 'How do you *know* this, or, what are your *proofs* for this?' In such circumstances, is the idealist permitted to mention some proofs which he knows to be completely useless?

Certainly, the idealist himself cannot be convinced of the truth of his own position on the basis of some proofs which he himself knows to be useless and simply because his opponents are deluded by their trustworthiness. To an honest inquirer, can one mention any proof without one's own conviction in them? In other words, the refutation of the opponents apart, the idealist has to establish his own case before an honest inquirer and this he cannot do on the basis of certain sham proofs in his own standard. On the contrary, to such an inquirer he is obliged to mention only those proofs in the trustworthiness of which he is fully convinced. And, if the proofs offered by him are supposed to create conviction in others, proofs of similar status offered by his opponent to create counterconviction have equal relevancy. This means, the general admission of the trustworthiness of proofs, which the idealist cannot afford. As a result, his position remains extraordinarily peculiar. He can claim neither selfconviction in his own position nor work for creating conviction in others.

Having asserted a conclusion without recognising the proofs in support of it, he cannot claim selfconviction. So also the honest inquirer, desiring to understand this conclusion and then becoming aware of the discrepancy between the proofs and the trustworthiness of the proofs themselves, is destined to remain unconvinced of the conclusion itself. On the other hand, if the proofs are accepted as trustworthy, the reality of the proofs become firmly established, making the conclusion of the idealist just impossible. Thus there remains no way for the inquirer to be convinced of the idealist's conclusion.

In short, there is an irreconcilable contradiction for the idealist between his thesis and its proofs, a contradiction to which Gotama has already drawn our attention.

To this, the idealist can possibly reply as follows: 'I was previously convinced of the conclusion on the basis of proofs recognised by ordinary people, though I became eventually convinced that such proofs have no existence *in reality*.'

The futility of such a defence is obvious. That which is

eventually realised as nonexistent in reality could never have any reality before. And if the proofs were previously without reality, how could they be then accepted as sound? On the other hand, if they were then right proofs, they could not but have real existence. Something iteself unreal or false can never prove a right conclusion—no more than the notion of the hare's horn can ever lead to any right knowledge. Or, what the inference of fire from fog (instead of from smoke) can result is only some wrong knowledge.

Thus, in short, only on the admission of the reality of the proofs offered by him can the idealist claim a legitimate conclusion. But the reality of proofs is what he wants to deny.

What, then, can he do? He is ultimately left with only one recourse. And that is to allow some sort of grudging reality to the proofs or *pramana*-s. And that is what he does. He claims that though ultimately unreal, the proofs have some sort of provisional reality understood in the ordinary wordly sense. In other words only from the standpoint of *samvrti-satya*, the proofs are supposed to be trustworthy. But this *samvrti* exists only in words. Hence something supposed to be real only from the standpoint of the socalled ordinary worldly truth can by no means justify the ultimate truth of a philosophical position.

11. Identity of Knowledge with Object Known?

But, asks Dharmakirti, can one ever jump out of the circle of one's own ideas and actually reach the external object, alleged to 'support' or correspond to the ideas? Only on this assumption can there be the direct evidence for the existence of external objects, and hence the admission of their reality. However this is prima facie impossible. The only evidence one can conceivably mention for the existence of something is one's awareness or knowledge or consciousness itself—the fact of one having a sensation or perception or idea. Nothing beyond this is actually known and hence only this can be accepted as real. It is ordinarily believed of course that this consciousness is the consciousness *of something*, supposed to exist outside consciousness in the external world. While having a sensation of blue or yellow, one usually believes that something actually

blue or yellow exists in the external world, of which it is the sensation. Philosophically, however, this is only a superstition, i.e. an assumption without any definite evidence. When asked, what is the evidence for the existence of such external things, the only answer that can possibly be offered is that there is a sensation of blue or yellow. What is indisputable is the sensation itself. But a sensation is patently mental. In other words, since the alleged object of knowledge is known invariably in the form of knowledge itself, only this knowledge is real. That which is known is nothing but this knowledge, or the knowledge is identical with the object known. The forms of the socalled objects—blue, yellow, etc.—are nothing but forms of knowledge. The invariable presentation of the object as the mere awareness proves the exclusive reality of the latter. Dharmakirti calls it the *sahopalambha-niyama*, the law of the invariable awareness of the object in the form of mere awareness.

In the maturer phase of Indian philosophical activity, there is literally a storm of controversy over this argument. We have the scope here to mention only some of the main considerations against it offered by the opponents of idealism.

The expression *sahopalambha* literally means 'simultaneous (*saha*) awareness (*upalambha*)'. In its literal sense, therefore, it amounts to the assertion that since the *idea* and the object are necessarily apprehended together—since there is no independent knowledge of the object as an object—there is no evidence for the existence of the object as such. In the absence of such evidence, it has to be admitted that the said object has no reality apart from the idea, which means that it is the same as the idea.

Subhagupta—and, closely following him, Akalanka also—want to show that, according to the accepted norm of Indian logic, such an argument is infested with a number of recognised fallacies. We may try to see some of their main points, without being involved in the technical terminologies of Indian logic as far as possible.

The fact, argues Subhagupta, that awareness as well as the object of awareness appear simultaneously (*saha*) in consciousness is not to be doubted. But this does not prove the identity of the two. On the contrary, this simultaneity itself follows from the characteristic peculiarity of the two. Awareness is by its very nature the awareness of something, just as it is the very nature of something known to be the object of awareness. What can be more natural than the consciousness of the two being simultaneous or always occurring together? The simultaneous consciousness of 'awareness' and 'the object of awareness' follows simply from the respective nature of the two: *jnana-jneya-svabhavasca niyamat saha vedyate.*[49]

There is nothing called 'apprehension' which is not 'the apprehension of something'; the visual apprehension is impossible without there being a visible object. This makes their co-presence or togetherness inevitable. But this also means that it is impossible to identify the object perceived as blue with the perception itself.[50]

In fact, argues Subhagupta, the very ground of the argument goes against its conclusion; the evidence on which it is based flatly contradicts that which is sought to be proved on its strength. What exactly is the ground of the argument? It is the simultaneity or togetherness of awareness and its object. But the very concept *simultaneous* means that something is simultaneous with something else; the concept *together* is meaningless without the admission of the co-presence of two distinct entites. Assuming the existence of only one entity, there is evidently no sense in talking of togetherness. Thus the ground of the argument, namely the simultaneity of 'awareness' with 'the object of awareness' makes sense only on the assumption that 'awareness' is something different from the 'object of awareness'. But this is precisely what the argument wants to deny, its purpose being to prove the exclusive reality of 'awareness' or 'idea'.[51]

49. Subhagupta *BS* 65.
50. *Ib.* 66.
51. *Ib.* 70-71.

Akalanka finds this argument particularly important, because he quotes it verbatim from Subhagupta. As against this criticism, however, the idealist can claim that the word *saha* or simultaneous in the argument is actually intended to be taken in the sense of 'identity' or *ekartha*. Assuming this, the argument is to be restated as follows: The idea and the object are experienced as identical and hence have to be admitted as identical.

But the premise of the argument thus restated, argues Subhagupta, is totally impermissible, because it cannot explain the simultaneous perception of the same thing by different persons. In a wrestling contest, for example, a number of persons see the same wrestlers at the same time. If what one sees is identical with one's seeing of it —if the wrestlers are nothing but one's own ideas of the wrestlers—how can the other spectators simultaneously participate in the same knowledge, i.e. see the same wrestlers at the same time and in the same place? One's own ideas belong to one's private consciousness and these cannot be public possessions. In the same way, on the assumption of the identity of the idea and the object, two persons cannot perceive the same blue at the same time. Thus the assumption that the object as experienced is identical with the idea is inadmissible for, as Subhagupta puts it, if the blue is identical with one's idea of the blue, how can another person know the same blue at the same time?[52]

Akalanka argues on the same lines: "Many persons perceive a blue thing at one and the same time. Now, here though a person cognises *the blue*, he does not cognise the *cognition of the blue* occurring in another person's mind. If the blue and the cognition of the blue were identical, he would have perceived even the cognition of the blue occurring in another person's mind."[53]

Incidentally, arguments like these have peculiar relevance against the position of Dharmakirti, to whom Indian idealism owes the *sahopalambha-niyama*. Though defend-

52. *Ib.* 72. 53. Shah 175.

ing the position known as subjective idealism, he wants at any rate to avoid the solipsistic view denying the existence of others' minds. On the contrary, Dharmakirti writes a book called the *Santanantara-siddhi*, the main purpose of which is to prove the existence of others' minds. One reason that makes him so anxious to prove this is his preoccupation with the problems of logic. An important theme of Indian logic is *parartha-anumana* literally 'inference for others' or demonstrative reasoning designed to prove a thesis for others. This becomes meaningless without the admission of the reality of the 'others', i.e., as the Vijnana-vadins put it, of the other streams of consciousness. In any case, since Dharmakirti himself is so keen on admitting the reality of others' minds, the arguments of Subhagupta and Akalanka just mentioned against the *sahopalambha-niyama* are peculiarly relevant against Dharmakirti.

Besides, as Akalanka wants to show, there is another danger—from the idealist's own viewpoint—in taking the word *saha* or simultaneous of the expression in the sense of 'identity' or *ekartha*. It is the danger of reducing the argument to a tautological trifle (*petitio principii*?) inasmuch as it leaves practically no difference between the conclusion aimed at and the ground advanced for the purpose of proving it. Thus, assuming this interpretation, the ground of the argument is: 'the awareness of the identity of the idea and the object'. And its conclusion is: 'the identity of the idea and the object'. However, if the identity of the idea and the object is already known, what is the point in trying to prove further that there is such an identity?[54] On the contrary, it is precisly because the normal perception of an object is experienced as the perception of a thing rather than of a bare idea, there is any relevance for the idealist's effort to prove that this is wrong or that the fact to the contrary is that the socalled object is nothing but the bare idea. But all this becomes redundant on

54. *Ib.*

the assumption that the object is already known as identical with the idea, or that we are already aware that what we know is nothing but our ideas or sensations.

Therefore, when Dharmakirti wants *to prove* the identity of the object and the idea, his own evidence for this cannot be the knowledge of the same identity as already existing. Thus it is futile to claim that in his argument, the word *saha* or 'together' actually means the 'identical'. And if so, the argument is exposed to the charge already made against it by Subhagupta: the very concept of 'togetherness' is meaningless unless it is assumed that something is together with something else, or the two things supposed to occur together have their distinct entities. In the context under discussion, it means the difference between the idea and the object—i.e. the very opposite of what Dharmakirti wants to establish.

Subhagupta has indeed many more arguments like these to offer against Dharmakirti. For our present purpose it is not necessary to quote all of them, particularly because, as we shall presently see, he—and, following him, Akalanka also—have another type of considerations against the same idealist argument, and that these considerations are much more important than merely scholastic. Before we pass on to them, let us have a brief idea of how Kumarila and the Nyaya-Vaisesikas assess the theoretical worth of this argument.

Knowledge, argues Kumarila, can never be identified with the object known, because of the characteristic difference between the two. What is this difference? In Indian terminology, it is the difference between the *grahaka* and the *grahya*, meaning 'that which causes one to receive' and 'that which is capable of being received by one'. The distinctive peculiarity of the former—i.e. of knowledge, or, more strictly, of perception—is thus receptivity. It enables one to receive information. One's knowledge or perception of the blue is entitled to be called knowledge only because it enables one to receive the information of the blue. What, on the contrary, is the dis-

tinctive peculiarity of the object of knowledge—of the *grahya*? The circumstances of being that the information of which is received by one. Blue is the object of the knowldge of the blue, because it—or the information of it—is capable of being received by one. If nobody ever knows what is blue—if its information is not capable of being ever received—the blue can never be the *grahya* or the object of knowledge.

The identification of knowledge with the object known would have made sense only if it were possible for the same thing to have the dual nature of being *grahaka* and *grahya*—i.e. of 'that which causes one to receive' as well as of 'that which is capable of being received by one'. But this, says Kumarila, is impossible. As he puts it, "You hold the one and the same thing to be both the receiver (*grahaka*) and the received (*grahya*), whereas you do not have any single instance to show that such a dual character belongs to the same entity."[55]

Kumarila goes into a great deal of technical detail of this argument, showing how the idealist can possibly answer it, and what, from his own point of view, are the answers. And he sums up the discussion with the following:[56]

You assert: 'The real reason for the co-comprehension is the identity of the conception and the object comprehended.' But this is never true. And certainly, you have not been questioned by me to afford you the occasion for making any wild assertion you please.

None experiences the character of both the comprehender and the comprehended with regard to a single entity. Nor can such dual character be ever established by inference, specially on the assumption that everything is mere sensation (for inference means the knowledge of something from something else).

This is Kumarila's basic objection to the proposed identification of knowledge with the known. There are, according to him, also many other palpable absurdities that fol-

55. Kumarila *SV* sunya-vada 64. 56. *Ib.* 119-20.

low from such an identification. Admitting the identity of the idea with the object, the idealist is obliged to assume further that the form of the object known is identical with the form of the idea itself. This means that the idea or sensation of blue is itself blue, that the sensation of yellow is itself yellow. But does this agree with the verdict of our actual experiences? Surely not. Nobody speaks of having a blue or yellow idea, nor of any idea that is itself sweet or sour. What people speak instead is of the sensation or idea *of blue* and not of *sensation or idea itself being blue*. And this is not simply because of the ignorant way of speaking; it is on the contrary due to the actual nature of the experience spoken of. Thus, in short, the indisputable verdict of experience is that the form of the object known cannot be merely the form of the knowledge itself, and hence it is idle to try to equate the two.[57]

As against this, the idealist argues that it is not as inconceivable for the idea itself to have a form of its own, as Kumarila wants us to believe. Thus, for example, the dream-ideas do have their specific forms. But whose forms are they? In the absence of any object being present before the dreamer, it is idle to imagine that the forms of the dream-ideas are derived from those of the external objects. These forms, therefore, belong to the dream-ideas themselves and as such it cannot be claimed that ideas as ideas have no form of their own.

In the course of the refutation of Dharmakirti's *sahopalambha-niyama,* Kumarila does not consider it necessary to answer such a selfdefence of the idealist, for, along with the Nyaya-Vaisesikas he has already argued that dreams are not really objectless, though what one dreams of belongs to a different space-time context. The forms of the dream-ideas are thus easily explained as derived from the forms of real objects of the real world.

Besides, argues Kumarila, the premise from which the idealist's conclusion is supposd to follow is itself unaccept-

57. *Ib.* 74-75.

able. This premise, namely that the awareness of the object of knowledge is necessarily simultaneous with the knowledge itself, is not a fact. One of the lines of argument that Kumarila wants to develop for proving this is based on the evidence of memory. Thus if the awareness of 'idea' and 'object' is necessarily co-present, the memory of this awareness also should necessarily be the memory of the idea *as well as* the object. There could be no remembrance of the awareness of the one without the remembrance of the awareness of the other. But the fact is that there can be the remembrance of the one without the remembrance of the other. As Kumarila[58] puts it,

People have, for example, an experience like this: 'I do not remember if any object had been comprehended by me during that time (e.g. the time of the deep dreamless sleep).' In such cases, people remember the appearance of the cognising idea independently of the form of the cognised object. Had there been no difference between the cognition and the cognised, the remembrance of the one would have brought about the remembrance of the other. But, as a matter of fact, we find that there is in the instance cited a remembrance only of the cognising idea. Hence it must be admitted that in the case referred to only the cognising idea had previously been comprehended.

Further, even in those cases in which people remember the previous experience of an idea as well as of the object, the remembrance of the two basically differs from one another. Thus the memory of the idea of blue is not the same as the memory of blue itself, which proves that, when previously experienced, the two are experienced differently. As Kumarila puts it, "the remembrance of the two does not appear in the same form".[59]

The position of the idealist, Kumarila goes on to argue, is peculiar indeed. According to him, everything is mere idea or knowledge; there is nothing that is not so. What, then, are the knower and the known? From the idealist point of view, knowledge itself appears sometimes as the

58. *Ib.* 83-84. 59. *Ib.* 85.

knower and sometimes as the known. But, argues Kumarila, if there is no real difference between knowledge, knower and the known, there cannot be much sense in the assertion that knowledge sometimes appears as the knower and sometimes as the known. Even from the idealist point of view, it has to be admitted that there is at least some difference between knowledge, knower and the known—difference sufficient enough to justify the distinct references to them, or to justify the assertion that knowledge sometimes *appears as* the knower and sometimes as the known. Without the admission of this minimum difference, the use of the words 'appears as' makes no sense. But this admission itself goes against the basic assumption that knowledge alone is real, that besides this knowledge there is nothing called the knower and the known.[60]

These are only a few of the really large number of theoretical considerations mentioned by Kumarila in refutation of the argument intended to identify the knower and the known. We may now pass on to see the Nyaya-Vaisesika reaction to the same argument. For this purpose, we shall follow here mainly its presentation by Phanibhusana Tarkavagisa.[61]

First, there is actually no proof for the identity of knowledge with the known. The argument of the idealist is that there is no awareness of the object of knowledge as distinct from knowledge, or that the awareness of the known is essentially and invariably the awareness of mere knowledge. But all this is mere assumption and not a fact. On the contrary, the verdict of experience is that what is known is known as distinct from knowledge. This verdict is fully corroborated by the analysis of the actual nature of the fact of knowing. Knowing is essentially a form of activity and the thing known is the object of this activity. The object of an activity cannot be equated to the activity itself. Just as cutting cannot cut itself, so also knowing cannot know itself. One can cut a piece of wood, only be-

60. *Ib.* 166-75.

61. Tarkavagisa v.166ff.

cause the wood is different from the act of cutting. So also one can know an object only because the object known is different from the act of knowing.

Secondly, without the admission of the distinct reality of the object known, even the reality of knowledge cannot be accounted for. A purely objectless knowledge—a knowledge that knows nothing—is never a fact. To this the idealist replies that he does not claim that knowledge is absolutely objectless. Knowledge does have its object; only this object is nothing but the form of knowledge itself. Thus the object of knowledge is not denied; only it is added that this object is made of the same stuff as knowledge itself. This means that such objects as ordinarily imagined as existing in the external world are really not so. As external things, they are totally unreal or totally nonexistent—just fictions. Assuming this, how is to be explained the felt externality of the objects known? In the idealist view, there is only one answer. This externality is just an appearance. Though really made of the stuff of knowledge—and, therefore, purely internal—the objects of knowledge somehow or other appear as external. But such a statement hardly makes any sense. If the very externality of the objects is totally nonexistent, how can it at all serve as a term of reference for a coherent statement? One can as well assert that somebody looks like the 'son of a barren woman'! If external things nowhere and never exist, how can one at all assert that internal ideas look like external things?

Thirdly, the total denial of external things makes it impossible to explain the infinite variety of the objects of experience. One has sometimes the knowledge of blue, sometimes of yellow. You sometimes see a tree, sometimes a house. Assuming that there is nothing outside the mind as blue, yellow, tree, house—that all these are in reality only internal ideas or mere knowledge—how can the difference in the experience of objects be accounted for? The Vijnana-vadins try to work out an elaborate theory to explain the diversity of the experience of objects.

Its main point is that some sort of perennial 'thirst for' or 'clinging to' called *vasana*—ultimately rooted in ignorance of course—gives various shapes to the momentary bits of the stream of consciousness, which, in their view, is the only reality. The tall metaphysical assumptions underlying this are obvious. However, these apart, the question is whether even such assumptions can coherently explain the problem of the diversity of the objects experienced. They cannot; for even the 'thirst for' or 'clinging to'—the said *vasana*—can call forth the various shapes of things only on the further assumption that such shapes—and therefore the things having the shapes—are actually experienced in the past. One with absolutely no previous experience of a house can never have the longing for a house; one with no previous experience of the blue cannot have the said 'thirst for' or 'clinging to' the blue. In short, whatever may be the metaphysical manoeuvre of the idealist, the variety or diversity of the objects of knowledge can be explained only on the ultimate admission of the variety of actual things known, i.e. on the admission of their objective reality.

Fourthly, the evidence of memory or recollection goes against the idealist. If whatever is known is mere knowledge, one's past knowledge is to be admitted as nothing but the knowledge of knowledge. Assuming this, there can be only one way of eventually remembering this, and that is: 'In the past, I knew such a knowledge.' But this is never the form in which past knowledge is later recalled. The form, on the contrary, invariably is: 'In the past, I knew such an object or such a thing.'

The list of such theoretical arguments against Dharmakirti's *sahopalambha-niyama*, as offered from the Nyaya-Vaisesika point of view, may indeed be much more extended. But that is not necessary for our present purpose. The main point of this argument itself, as we have already said, is basically the same as the one on the strength of which Berkeley wants to prove subjective idealism. Whether there can be any decisive refutation of this argument

purely on the theoretical level is, in European philosophy, an open question. Diderot, the leader of the French Encyclopaedists, observes, "Those philosophers are called *idealists* who, being conscious only of their existence and of the sensations which succeed each other within themselves, do not admit anything else. An extravagant system which, to my thinking, only the blind could have originated; a system which, to the shame of human intelligence and philosophy, is the most difficult to combat, although the most absurd of all." Lenin[62] quotes this and remarks that Diderot "came very close to the standpoint of contemporary materialism (that arguments and syllogisms alone do not suffice to refute idealism, and that here it is not a question for theoretical argument)." What is it that really suffices to refute idealism? We have already seen that, following Marx and Engels, Lenin shows that it is ultimately practice.

From this point of view, what is really decisive about the refutation of idealism is already said by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, when they insist on recognising practice as the real criterion of truth. Significantly, it is from the point of view of practice alone that philosophers like Subhagupta and Akalanka also come out with their decisive rejection of the claim that the object known is nothing but mere idea.

Akalanka comments: *na hi jatu visajnanam maranam pratidhavati*—death does not result from the mere knowledge or idea of the poison. "If venom is not an external reality but only a form of consciousness or an idea, how could there take place the phenomenon of death on taking it? We do not die simply on account of our having an idea of the venom."[63]

A stock argument of the idealist, says Subhagupta, is as follows. One experiences in dream one's body being chopped into pieces. This is evidently a subjective idea without any objective reality to correspond to it. Since this is

62. Lenin MEC 23.

63. Shah 176-77.

palpably so in dream, what can be the guarantee for any external reality corresponding to the ideas experienced while awake? To this, Subhagupta answers: If the idealist is seriously convinced that the beheading and bodily nourishment of the waking state have the same subjective status as that of the dreaming state, why does he take so much care not to lose his own head and to gain his own bodily nourishment?[64] Being a Buddhist by creed, Subhagupta naturally considers it relevant to point to the Vijnana-vadins that, on the admission of their own metaphysical position, the practice of Buddhist morality proves meaningless: "When one entertains the view that the mind alone is real, how can one fulfil the elementary duties such as charity etc.? ... When one practises repeatedly and several times a charity-thought (i.e charity in the form of mere thought, or more simply, the bare idea of charity), it never releases anybody from poverty."[65] Thus, in short, ideas alone cannot be considered real. Practical life proves this to be false at every step.

12. Defence of the Concept of Matter

The denial of the external object, says Kumarila,[66] is based on two lines of argument. Of these, one is epistemological, or, in Kumarila's terminology, based on the examination of the sources of knowledge. The other is ontological, or, in Kumarila's terminology, based on the examination of the nature of the object itself. We have so far examined mainly the first of these two lines of argument. We may now pass on to a brief idea of the second and see how it is sought to be answered by the opponents of idealism.

In proof of idealism, Dignaga writes the *Alambana-pariksa*. Its main theme is the refutation of atomism. His argument is that the external things, if assumed at all, are to be conceived either as atoms or as aggregates of atoms. But neither of these alternatives is logically tenable. The

64. Subhagupta *BS* 5-6.
65. *Ib.* 163-65.
66. Kumarila *SV* niralambana-vada 17-18.

atom can never be proved. It is no more than a fiction—like the flower imagined to blossom in empty space. The aggregate of atoms—or, more specifically, the 'whole' which, though made of atoms, is supposed to have a distinct entity over and above the mere atoms or 'parts'—is equally fictitious. Dignaga sarcastically calls it the 'double moon' of the Vaisesikas, i.e. a typically illusory object frequently mentioned in Indian philosophy. Thus external objects cannot be real in either of the two conceivable senses. What are they? In Dignaga's view, they are nothing more than mere ideas. Thus, in short, only ideas are real and the external things ordinarily supposed to correspond to them have no reality.

This book of Dignaga, though very brief, has a peculiar interest in the Indian philosophical tradition. It shows another important technique with which the Indian idealists, particularly of the maturer phase of the Indian philosophical activity, want to prove their own position. It is basically the technique of eliminating the concept of matter by its direct examination. In the history of Indian philosophy, we come across mainly three theories of the nature of matter—*bhuta-vada, pradhana-vada* and *paramanu-vada*. However, roughly after the 5th century A.D., no prominent philosopher is known to have defended the first two of these theories, while there are many to defend *paramanu-vada* or atomism. Accordingly, during the comparatively maturer phase of the history of Indian philosophy, the elimination of the concept of matter by the Indian idealists assumes primarily the form of the elimination of the theory of the atom.

Thus, though the zeal for the refutation of atomism is to be traced as far back as the times of Nagarjuna, it does not then have the special prominence which it acquires later. As we have just said, Dignaga considers it important to write a book exclusively for the purpose. In this he takes up certain basic arguments against atomism as already advanced by Vasubandhu. But he also tries to elaborate and strengthen these arguments. After Dignaga, the

polemics against atomism are further elaborated by Santaraksita, Kamalasila and many others, who go into a great deal of hair-splitting scholasticism for the purpose. In this way there develops in Indian philosophy a fairly extensive literature on the refutation of atomism.

However the main purpose of this refutation of atomism having been the substantiation of philosophical idealism, the rejection of idealism in its turn also, at least to a considerable extent, has to assume the form of the defence of atomism. In this defence, many philosophers (Subhagupta, Akalanka, Kumarila, etc.) show a keen interest, though the keenest among them all are naturally the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, for whose philosophy atomism constitutes the most vital factor.

A full survey of Indian atomism—inclusive of the polemics against it as well as in its defence—naturally forms the subject for an independent study. We have the scope here to note in very brief outlines how the defence of atomism constitutes an important aspect of the Indian rejection of philosophical idealism. For this purpose, we shall stick mainly to the arguments of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas.

We may conveniently begin the discussion with one of the typical arguments of the Indian idealists intended to prove the unreality of the material world. This argument is already mentioned in section 2 of the present chapter. Things ordinarily supposed to exist in the material world are not real, because they cannot stand the 'scrutiny by knowledge'. Thus, for example, one readily believes that there is a real cloth in the material world. Properly scrutinised, however, it is found that there are only individual threads and nothing called 'cloth' over and above. None of these threads, again, can be considered real, because further scrutiny shows that there are mere fibres of thread, and so there is no thread over and above. These fibres, again, are unreal, because on scrutiny only their parts remain. This process of resolving the parts into their further parts, argues the idealist, ultimately culminates at a point

where one is left with nothing at all. Thus the original thing is ultimately reduced to nothingness.

Two problems are involved in this line of argument. First, the problem of the 'parts' (*avayava*) and the 'whole' (*avayavi*). The question, in other words, is whether the cloth (*avayavi*), though made of the threads (*avayava*), has any distinct entity of its own (*dravyantara*), i.e. over and above the mere parts? Secondly, the problem of the divisibility of a physical thing. Does this process of dividing the thing into its parts—and the parts into their further parts—really end in the void or nothingness?

Though, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika view, both these problems are intimately interrelated, we shall discuss here only the latter, because it leads us directly to see their main proof for atomism.[67]

That the physical things are divisible into parts and that these parts again are divisible into their further parts is for the Nyaya-Vaisesikas an incontestable empirical fact. But the question of the limits of this division is a logical one. How far is it logically permissible to extend this process of division? There can be three possible answers to this.

First, the process of dividing a thing into its smaller and still smaller parts has, logically speaking, no limit at all. You can think of carryng on this process of division endlessly or up to infinity, i.e. without being logically compelled to stop at any definite point.

Secondly, the process of division has a logical limit no doubt, and that is nothingness. You can think of dividing a thing into its parts—and these parts into their further parts—until you reach a stage where there is nothing left to be divided any further. Thus the process of division stops when you reach the void. This is, in fact, the position of some of the idealists, who argue that since the process of splitting a thing into its parts ultimately leads you to the void or nothingness, you are obliged to admit that this

67. Tarkavagisa v.77ff.

void or nothingness itself is indicative of the ultimate status of the thing, which, in other words, means that the thing has no reality of its own.

Thirdly, the process of division has a definite limit, but in a sense fundamentally different from the one just mentioned. The division logically culminates when certain very minute but positive particles are reached. These particles are to be conceived as being without parts, and since division means nothing but the resolution of something into its parts, these indivisible ultimate particles cannot be divided any further.

Such ultimate particles are the atoms or *paramanu*-s of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas. In defence of their reality, they have to show that the first two possibilities of the divisibility of a physical thing are logically impermissible.

The hypothesis of infinite divisibility first. This, argue the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, is a palpable absurdity, because it is in open conflict with directly observable definite facts. There cannot be any dispute at all about such facts as the mountain being greater in magnitude than a seed-grain or the pot being bigger in size than the potsherd. On the hypothesis of the infinite divisibility of the physical things, however, facts like these cannot be true at all. According to this hypothesis, a mountain is supposed to be divided into an infinite number of parts, which means that it is ultimately made of an infinite number of parts. But so also is a seed grain. Hence both the mountain and the seed-grain, supposed to be made of an infinite number of parts, are to be viewed as being equal in magnitude. This magnitude, moreover, is to be conceived as immeasurable (*ameya*), because a thing made of an infinite number of parts cannot have a limited or finite magnitude. Besides, the same or similar considerations would—on the hypothesis of the infinite divisibility of the things—lead to equate the size of the whole thing with its parts—e.g. of the pot with the potsherd. The potsherd—like the pot itself—is to be conceived as being made of an infinite number of parts. And if so, how can one account for the visible

fact of the thing being bigger than its parts? As a matter of fact, 'the hypothesis of infinite divisibility of matter implies that there are only wholes and no parts. The so-called parts, even the smallest conceivable ones, will be relative and, being susceptible of further division, will transpire to be wholes in their turn, and so on to infinity. It is clearly an inconceivable position. The absurdity can be driven home by a simple question. Are the parts possessed of gross magnitude, and, if so, is the magnitude equal or unequal to that of the whole? If the parts are devoid of gross magnitude, they will be atoms; and if the magnitudes of the parts and the whole be equal, then the relation of part and whole cannot be conceived to subsist between them. And if they are of unequal magnitude, then the explanation of inequality would be possible only by having recourse to the theory of atoms; for the inequality of the number of atoms will in that case be responsible for the inequality of magnitude.'[68]

Such are the main considerations on the basis of which the Nyaya-Vaisesikas propose to reject the first possibility, namely that the divisibility of a physical thing can be endless or limitless. To avoid a number of absurdities from the standpoint of definitely observed facts, the divisibility of a thing is bound to have a conceptual limit, or, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika terminology, an ultimate rest (*visrama*).

But what exactly is this limit? Can it be the void or nothingness? Can it be that the process of dividing a thing into its parts—and the parts, again, into still smaller parts—culminates on the discovery that nothing at all is left at the core and hence the talk of continuing the process of division further is meaningless? This, as we have already seen, is the possibility suggested by some of the Indian idealists, on the basis of which they argue that the physical things are ultimately made of void or nothingness. But this, argue the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, shows the absurdity

68. Bhaduri 56-57.

of their position. Assuming that the process of dividing a thing ultimately culminates in nothingness, one is obliged to view the original thing which one starts dividing as itself made of the void or nothingness, because that is what one reaches while trying to see its inner constitution. If the process of splitting an earthen jar leads one to discover that its innermost core is the void or nothingness, the jar itself is to be viewed as totally nonexisting or totally unreal—something purely fictitious. However, if this is so, can there be any sense in talking of dividing a jar into its parts? If something does not at all exist there is no sense in dividing it, it being obviously crazy to talk of division when the thing to be divided is itself denied. One can no more talk of dividing the purely nonexistent than of digging a hole in the vacuum. In short, division presupposes the actual existence of the thing divided and hence if the physical things do not at all exist, the process of starting to divide them becomes meaningless. Thus the view of the division of a thing culminating ultimately in the void or nothingness is to be scrapped, because it makes the fact of the process of the division itself meaningless.

Discarding thus the possibility of the infinite divisibility of the material things as well as of the ultimate vacuity of matter, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas argue that we are logically left only with one possibility. It is the view that the process of division of a thing culminates where a finite number of positively existing minute particles are reached. Such particles, because they are no more divisible into parts, are to be conceived as indestructible, for destruction means nothing but the resolution of something into its parts: a pot is destroyed when it is broken into the potsherds. These indivisible minute particles are, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika view, the ultimate constituents of matter. And these are the atoms or *paramanu*-s.

The atoms are of course too minute to be directly perceived by the sense-organs. But this does not mean that their existence cannot be proved. On the contrary, the

Nyaya-Vaisesikas claim that there is definite inferential proof for the existence of atoms.

By pounding a lump of clay one gets certain minute particles. The minutest particle directly perceptible are the motes as seen in the sunbeam. Such a mote, because it has magnitude enough to be directly perceived, is to be conceived as made of parts, for everything with perceptible magnitude are so, as for instance, the jar. Again, the component parts of the mote are to be conceived as made of parts, because the part of a thing with perceptible magnitude is itself made of parts, as for instance the potsherd (*kapala*). However these parts of the mote, being themselves without perceptible magnitude, are not supposed to have any further parts. These are the atoms.

There are, thus, two steps in the argument.

(i) Everything that has perceptible magnitude is made of parts, just as a jar. The mote reached by pounding a lump of clay, for example, has perceptible magnitude. Therefore it is made of parts. But the same ground cannot be used to prove that the parts of the mote too have parts—such a mote being, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika view, the smallest thing with magnitude enough to be directly perceived. Their parts, being still smaller, cannot have perceptible magnitude. Therefore to prove that the parts of such particles too are made of parts is posed a second inference.

(ii) The parts that go to the making of a thing with perceptible magnitude are themselves made of parts, as are the component parts of a jar. The parts of the mote go to the making of a thing with perceptible magnitude, namely the mote itself. Therefore these parts are themselves made of further parts. However no part of a mote is itself perceptible or has a perceptible magnitude. Hence there is no point in arguing further that the parts of the mote are made of parts. It is at this point that the analysis of a material thing into its parts has to find its culmination or rest (*visrama*), it being already shown that such an analysis has necessarily to culminate somewhere.

The mote in the sunbeam, i.e. the smallest among the things with perceptible magnitude, is called *trasarenu* or *tryanuka,* literally 'the triad'. It is thus called, because it is conceived as made of three parts, each of which is called *dvyanuka* or dyad. The *trasarenu* or triad, being the smallest of the perceptible particles, its parts—the dyads—are not perceptible in size. Being the part of something with perceptible magnitude, however, each *dvyanuka* or dyad is conceived as made of parts. The parts of a dyad are only two, each of which is a *paramanu* or atom. It represents the conceptual limit of diminishing magnitude.

Consistently with their atomism, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas conceive of the production of an effect only in terms of the conjunction of its parts. So also the destruction of something is conceived exclusively in terms of the disjunction of its parts. Since atoms have no parts, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika view there is no question either of their production or of the destruction. The atoms, in other words, are both beginningless and endless—in short, eternal.

For our present purpose, we need not go into greater detail of the Nyaya-Vaisesika atomism. Instead of that, we can try to have a brief idea of the theoretical considerations with which the Indian idealists want to refute it and also of the way in which the Nyaya-Vaisesikas themselves face such objections.

Already at an early period it is argued, evidently by some representatives of Sunya-vada, that the atomic theory is incompatible with the omnipresence (*sarvagatata*) of empty space or *akasa*, which the Nyaya-Vaisesikas themselves are obliged to admit.[69] Empty space, in order to be omnipresent, has to be conceived as present both *inside* and *outside* the atom. But this is fatal for the atomic hypothesis, for it means that the atom has an inside and an outside and that its inside is different from its outside. But this implies the theoretical possibility of

69. *NS* iv.2.18ff.

dividing an atom into its inside and outside, which therefore are parts of the atom. Thus is destroyed the concept of indivisibility—and therefore also of the eternality—of the atom or, in short, the conception of the atom itself. The other alternative is to surrender the view that empty space or *akasa* is omnipresent, which, for reasons into which we need not digress here, is equally ruinous for the Nyaya-Vaisesikas.

Gotama argues that such an objection against atomism is really irrelevant, inasmuch as it is based on the tendency to extend to the atoms the characteristic peculiarities of the composite bodies, i.e. of the ordinary things made of parts. An ordinary composite body has an inside and an outside no doubt, but the infinitesimal atom is theoretically reached only when all concepts of the composite bodies are left behind. Thus the very talk of empty space being related to both the inside and outside of an atom is meaningless. Empty space, being omnipresent, has conjunction with the atom as such; but this does not mean that the atom is porous and allows empty space to be conjoined to its inside.

Apparently more serious are certain other objections raised by the idealists against atomism. Thus it is argued that anything which is not omnipresent—i.e. everything with a limited size (*murti*)—must have a definite shape (*samsthana*), like square, triangular, globular. The atom, which is not omnipresent, is limited in size. It cannot be without a shape of its own. This is supposed to be *parimandala*, usually meaning the globular. But no shape is conceivable without the admission of the configuration of parts. Hence the shape of the socalled atom can be explained only on the admission of its having parts, which in other words means that it is no atom at all.

This, argue the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, simply shows how inveterate is the habit of thinking merely in terms of the composite objects of common experience, which have shapes in the sense of configuration of parts. But this characteristic cannot be extended to the case of the atoms

because of the simple reason that the conception of the atom is reached only when the theoretical process of splitting a composite thing into small and still smaller parts cannot be carried on any further. How then can the characteristic of composite objects be extended to the atom? It is true the word *parimandala* is used in connection with the atom. But the purpose of this is not to indicate that the atoms are actually globular in shape. On the contrary, the word *parimandala* as applied to the atom simply means the infinitesimal or the minutest conceivable size. But it is no use making a philosophical fuss over the use of this word and take it to mean that which is not intended to be meant by it.

But, asks Vasubandhu, how is the conjunction of atoms at all conceivable, consistently with the conception of their partlessness? After all, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika view, the composite objects of common experience result from the combination—or conjunction—of many atoms. Placed in its three-dimensional context, an atom is obviously exposed to six different directions: north, south, east, west, up and down. It has therefore to be admitted that six other atoms are—or can be—combined with it from these six directions. But does this mean that the six atoms are combined with six different parts of the central atom? In that case, the central atom itself will have six different parts, and as such will not be an atom at all. The other alternative is to imagine that the combining atoms are not separated from each other in space, that they all coalesce on the same point and as such the central atom is not in need of having separate facets for the required combination. Such a possibility results only in a theoretical absurdity. If all the combining atoms coalesce completely in a single point of space, their total magnitude cannot be more than that of a single atom. Thus howsoever large may be the number of atoms combined to produce a composite object, the composite object itself will remain atomic in size and hence also imperceptible. To avoid such an absurdity, therefore, the atomists have to admit that the different

combining atoms are conjoined with different parts of the central atom, which in other words amounts to the surrender of the conception of the atom itself.

In short, there can be no satisfactory solution of the problem of atomic conjunction from the standpoint of the atomists. This is, in fact, the most formidable of all the objections raised in Indian philosophy against the theory of the atoms. Evidently it is historically premature for the Indian atomists themselves to answer this objection with the positive explanation of atomic conjunction. A great deal of scientific research—of the exploration of the real nature of matter—based on the accumulation of an enormous amount of data of observation and experiment is necessary to arrive at the positive explanation of the fact of atomic combination, which, when actually reached in contemporary science, also calls for basic amendment of the old conception of the partless particle.

But this does not mean that the Nyaya-Vaisesikas have no sound defence against the objection under consideration or that their inability to evolve an adequate explanation of atomic combination means that they are obliged to surrender their conception of matter. The fact is just the contrary. They have a remarkable answer to the idealist's objection—an answer that can be traced as far back as Gotama and Vatsyayana.

Let us first mention its main point and then discuss why it is so remarkable. When the atomic hypothesis is already shown as the only satisfactory solution of the problem of the divisibility of physical things of unequal magnitude—when it is already proved that the assumption of any particle smaller in magnitude than the atom is committed to theoretical absurdities—there can be no logical sanction whatsoever for the postulation of the parts of the atoms (smaller than the atoms) for explaining the problem of atomic combination, howsoever difficult this problem may be.[70] In short, the atoms—once proved—

70. *Ib.* iv.22-25.

cannot be disproved because of the difficulties of an adequate understanding of the problem of atomic combination. Let us try to be clearer about this.

To begin with: How are the Nyaya-Vaisesikas led to the atomic hypothesis? Evidently, not because of any a-priori need of their system. On the contrary, they feel that without it they find two indisputable facts of observation of nature unexplained. First, everything in nature—i.e., more specifically, everything material—is breakable into parts, and these parts, again, are divisible into their further parts. Secondly, these material things are unequal in magnitude. As facts of observation, both these are too palpable to be doubted in any way. The problem, therefore, is to explain these two facts taken together. And the only possible explanation which the Nyaya-Vaisesikas are driven to is the atomic hypothesis. As we have already seen there are three—*and only three*—conceivable ways of viewing the fact of the division of a physical thing into its parts and these parts into their further parts. First, this division is an endless process. Secondly, it ends in nothingness. Thirdly, it has to end on reaching the infinitesimal particles without any part of their own. The last is the hypothesis of the atoms and it has to be accepted because of the absurdities of the first two.

In these circumstances, one can talk of rejecting the atomic hypothesis and imagine the atoms themselves to be composed of parts only by reverting to either of the first two possibilities, i.e. by committing oneself to the absurdities involved therein. This is actually the position of those who claim that for the purpose of explaining the atomic conjunction, it is necessary to conceive the atoms as made of parts. From the point of view of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, however, this is not a refutation of atomism; it is only the commitment to certain absurdities. If it is theoretically obligatory to stick to the hypothesis of the atoms, and therefore also to the view that the material things of the world result from the combination of the atoms, the evidence of the ignorance of the nature of

atomic combination cannot be an apology for the surrender of the hypothesis itself. Thus, how exactly this combination takes place is not known to them. But the lack of this knowledge is, from their viewpoint, no proof for the untenability of the atomic hypothesis. On the contrary, since it is necessary to admit the atoms, it is also theoretically necessary to admit that somehow or other they do combine to make the physical things of everyday experience, though how exactly they combine is yet to be found out.

What, then, from the Nyaya-Vaisesika point of view does this difficulty of the problem of atomic conjunction actually amount to? Judged by us retrospectively, it really means that in the development of Indian science, the satisfactory solution of one problem concerning the nature of matter, ushers in certain new and as yet unsolved problems. But this is precisely the way in which science advances in the past, as it is still advancing. The evidence of the as yet unsolved problem concerning the nature of matter cropping up on the soil of some successful solution already arrived at, cannot be an evidence against the latter. It is, on the contrary, only an evidence for the fact that our knowledge of the nature of matter is ever-progressive: the more we know about it the clearer do we feel that much more remains to be known, and therefore also grows the urge to know better. At least this is the position of the materialists as contrasted with that of the idealists, who refuse to be satisfied with anything short of the final and absolute truth and thus fail to stimulate scientific inquiry. As Lenin[71] puts it,

> Materialism clearly formulates the as yet unsolved problem and thereby stimulates the attempt to solve it.

13. Matter and Motion: Mechanical Materialism

If it is important for us to note the scientific interest of the Nyaya-Vaisesika defence of its conception of matter

71. Lenin MEC 33

against the idealist's enthusiasm for its elimination, it is also important today to see the limitations of this conception of matter. By far the most serious of these limitations is the way in which its relation to motion is conceived.

Not that the Nyaya-Vaisesikas make no effort towards the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of motion. They do it and what they achieve is not without significance particularly in the context of their own times. They try to arrive at a systematic classification of the motion of the physical things as actually observed. This leads them to view motion mainly of two types—*prayatna* or motion resulting from volitional effort and *gamana,* which probably means all other forms of motion not due to any volitional effort. The former comprises of such motion as throwing a thing upward or downward and of contracting and expanding things. The other type of motion not resulting from the volitional effort comprises of the movement of the flame upward, the movement of the liquids downward, the falling of bodies due to their weight, etc. The Nyaya-Vaisesikas also try to explain the specific cause of each type of motion of things as actually observed, whose importance in the history of Indian science is not to be ignored.

Still the grave weakness of their view remains, for motion itself is conceived by them as necessarily external to matter. Matter, in this view, is intrinsically static. This staticity is true not only for the composite material things —which therefore can neither move nor change without something external acting on them—but also for matter in its free atomic form. These simple particles, being themselves eternal, are of course beyond any change. They can only be moved from one point of space to another, disjoined from certain atomic combinations and conjoined with certain others. The concept of change has really no other meaning in the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy than such purely mechanical shuffling of the atoms. What is

worse is that even for the motion required for such mechanical shuffling, the atoms need something alien to matter itself, for there is no scope in the Nyaya-Vaisesika view for any spontaneous movement of the atoms. At the same time, this alien factor imparting motion is a vital need for the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, for without it free atoms have neither the possibility of coming in conjunction with each other and thus to form the composite material things, nor have they the possibility of even being disjoined with each other and thus to effect change in the material things. The atoms are thus conceived as constantly in motion, but this because of something totally alien to their own nature or because of some force existing completely outside matter.

What is this force? In Indian terminology, it is *adrsta*, which means 'the unseen'. Had this been a mere confession of ignorance—an honest admission of the lack of knowledge of that which leads the free atoms to combine with each other for producing the physical things of nature—it would not have been so disastrous for the scientific spirit of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas. But the fact is that beginning from a very ancient period, this concept of *adrsta* or 'the unseen' acquires in Indian philosophy a theologico-ethical significance positively inimical to science, and this creeps into the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy because of its grave weakness of conceiving motion as something alien to matter. The Nyaya-Vaisesika position, at least in the form in which it comes down to us, is accordingly described as follows: "The cause of creative motion is believed to be *adrsta*, that unseen moral force that guides the destiny of souls according to their *karman* and requires them to be provided with properly equipped bodies and an appropriate objective world for the experience of pleasure and pain. It is due to the operation of this metempirical force that atoms start moving to get together in order that they may be integrated into countless varieties of things."[72]

72. Bhaduri 147.

This aspect of the Nyaya-Vaisesika has evidently only a negative interest for us. It is the interest of seeing how the materialism of these ancient and medieval atomists—like the materialism of the mechanical materialists of Europe—is exposed to the risk of easily passing into its opposite, and allow superstitition to eclipse science.

Chapter 8

MATTER AND CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Preliminary Remarks

So far we have discussed mainly two features of the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism constituted by the Lokayata, Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika. First, as contrasted with certain other views contesting idealism, these three are—in their original form—characterised by secularism, rationalism and science-orientation. Secondly, these philosophies not only defend the reality of the material world or nature, but work moreover for an essentially materialist interpretation of its constitution, based on their respective theories of the nature of matter, namely the *bhuta*-s (physical elements), *pradhana* (primeval matter) and *paramanu*-s (atoms).

We now pass on to discuss another important feature of these philosophies. In all these, the ontological status of consciousness—compared to matter—is distinctly secondary. In the case of the Lokayatas, this is quite obvious. In the case of the Samkhyas, we can see this after certain clarifications. According to the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, though matter, in the form of the atoms, is eternal and immutable, consciousness is essentially a transient phenomenon, somehow or other temporarily produced by the peculiar collocation of a number of intrinsically unconscious (*jada*) entities, most of which are material.

Of course, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas themselves have no clear answer to the question of how this can happen. How the essentially unconscious entities can produce consciousness is something they are unaware of. But their philoso-

phical position demands that this has to be so. In the Samkhya philosophy, we have a hazy view of an attempt at a theoretical understanding of the origin of consciousness from matter. But the boldest explanation of this possibility is to be found in the Lokayata which, though the most neglected of all Indian philosophies, has from this point of view a unique interest in Indian thought.

Of these three philosophies we shall take up the Lokayata last, and this mainly to see how it solves a problem for the solution of which the Nyaya-Vaisesika and Samkhya are groping.

2. Nyaya-Vaisesika View of Consciousness

Eminent modern scholars have discussed the question of how all sorts of assorted thoughts are gradually grafted on the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy and are to be found even in the texts that have come down to us as containing its earliest available exposition.[1] This question, though very important for the history of Indian science and philosophy, is also highly technical. It demands a great deal of textual analysis and a comparative assessment of the theoretical material contained in both our philosophical and nonphilosophical sources—the latter inclusive of the epics, the vast mythological literature (Puranas) and the ancient medical treatises like the *Caraka-samhita*.

For obvious reasons we cannot rediscuss this question here. We have not even the scope to sum up the answers suggested by different scholars, for they raise fresh controversies. Still it is important to note that scholars of unquestioned eminence find it necessary to raise and discuss this question, for there are strong indications of later grafts on the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy.

It is specially significant to note that the view of 'soul' and consciousness, as found in the earliest available texts of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, appears somewhat bewildering

1. H. P. Sastri in JASB 1905.177ff; Vidyabhusana 40ff; Frauwallner ii.230 & 238 notes.

even to the orthodoxy-oriented modern scholars. It is evidently a view of the soul with a peculiarly materialist nuance, though also strongly coloured by certain direct corollaries drawn from the idealist point of view. In other words, the Nyaya-Vaisesika view of the soul—and therefore also of the phenomenon of consciousness related to it—seems to have a materialist basis though, at the cost of inner consistency, some distinctly idealist elements are also added to it.

A convenient starting point for understanding this foundation is to compare and contrast the standard Nyaya-Vaisesika view of soul and consciousness with that of the Advaita Vedanta.

What is the main point of this contrast?

In the Advaita view, consciousness constitutes the essence of the soul. The soul is nothing but sheer consciousness. Therefore it is wrong to say that the soul has consciousness, which implies that consciousness is a quality or attribute of some distinct entity or substance called the soul. Further, this soul—as identified with consciousness—is the only reality. This means that the material world is unreal and that there is no multiplicity of souls.

Instead of such a bare nondual consciousness, the Naya-Vaisesikas speak of many souls which, according to them, belong to the category of *dravya* or substance. To the same category also belong seven other substances with equal ontological status: earth, water, fire, air, *akasa*, time, space and *manas*—the last meaning the 'internal sense-organs': "the doctrine treats all *dravya*-s alike; and even the self, it regards, is one object among others possessing properties, exhibiting relations, and knowable like them."[2]

What is the relation of the soul to consciousness? First, in the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy, consciousness is nothing but knowledge or awareness (*jnana*) in its essentially empirical sense, i.e. without the mystical suggestion

2. Hiriyanna 229.

of the idealists. Secondly, far from constituting the essence of the soul, consciousness is one of the many qualities or attributes of the soul. Thirdly, even as a quality, consciousness has a somewhat secondary status. It is not an eternal quality (*nitya-guna*), but a purely temporal quality (*janya-guna*). This means that the soul is supposed to acquire consciousness only under certain specific conditions; if these are not fulfilled, it cannot have any consciousness at all. By its inherent nature, the soul is thus unconscious or without consciousness. Consciousness is an accidental quality or attribute produced in a soul only when it is conjoined with certain other things. To the orthodoxy-oriented scholar, M. Hiriyanna,[3] such a view of the soul and its relation to consciousness appears odd:

A peculiar feature of the system is that it makes *jnana* or knowledge an attribute of the self, and that too, not an essential, but only an adventitious one. Its adventitious character is taken to be shown by dreamless sleep where the self is supposed to endure without being characterised by knowledge. The self thus differs from matter only in that it *may* become conscious and not in that it is itself mental in nature. The two other attributes of it, viz desire (*iccha*) and volition (*yatna*) are conceived more or less similarly. They, like knowledge, refer to an object (*savisayaka*) and are meaningless without such reference. The really mental or spiritual element in the doctrine accordingly is not the self, but these three attributes which are all transient.

This transient character of the really spiritual elements in the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy, understood along with its emphasis on the eternal reality of the atoms, can, in modern terminology, only mean that in this view spirit is secondary as compared to matter. Therefore, from the standpoint of Engels—who, depending on the criterion of the primacy of matter or spirit, proposes to classify all philosophical views basically under materialism and idealism —this secondary status of the 'spiritual' in the Nyaya-

3. *Ib.* 230.

Vaisesika is to be considered as precariously near-materialist, though not materialist in its full modern sense. We shall presently see that Hiriyanna goes a step further and observes that the Nyaya-Vaisesika view of consciousness can make sense only when understood as representing basically the same position as that of the plain-speaking materialists or Carvakas. An orthodox scholar like him would not certainly see materialism in an allegedly orthodox philosophy like the Nyaya-Vaisesika without a compelling reason. Such a reason leaps before our eyes when we try to understand the Nyaya-Vaisesika view of the origin of consciousness.

How does a soul, in spite of being intrinsically unconscious, acquire the accidental attribute called consciousness? For understanding the Nyaya-Vaisesika answer to this, let us first be clear about the meaning of consciousness in this philosophy. By consciousness is meant knowledge or *jnana,* which is primarily presentative awareness (*anubhava*) as contrasted with representative awareness or memory (*smrti*). The presentative awareness has two main forms, immediate and mediate—i.e. perceptual and inferential. Of these, the latter necessarily presupposes the former, and hence in Nyaya-Vaisesika perceptual knowledge is the most basic form of knowledge. Therefore its theory of the origin of consciousness is best understood in terms of its view of the origin of perceptual knowledge—of immediate presentative awareness.

How does knowledge in this sense originate? What are the conditions to be fulfilled so that a soul can acquire consciousness? The first and foremost is of course the conjunction of a soul with a body, because the body is endowed with sense-organs and no soul can acquire consciousness without being conjoined with the 'objects'[4] through the agency of the sense-organs. A pure or object-

4. Though by 'object' is technically meant 'pleasure and pain as well as their causes', for all practical purposes it refers to the things of the physical world. *NS*.i 1.14 and Tarkavagisa i.189f.

less consciousness is inconceivable for the Nyaya-Vaisesikas.

Secondly, because of its conjunction with the body, a soul gets conjoined to its internal sense-organs or *manas*. Through this it is conjoined to one of the five external sense-organs. These in their turn are conjoined to the various things of the external world, and thus helps the soul to have conjunction with the external objects. As the final result of this chain of conjunctions—favoured moreover by certain physical conditions like the presence of sufficient light etc.—there results the emergence of consciousness or knowledge in the soul. Using the *plus* sign for conjunction, we may schemetically put the view as follows:

Soul+body+internal sense+external sense+ external object → consciousness.

A few points of this view are to be specially noted. First, being atomists, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas talk of combination in terms of conjunction alone. Secondly, with the snapping anywhere of the chain of conjunctions just mentioned, there is no consciousness in the soul. This means that the soul remains totally unconscious in the absence of any of the following: body, *manas*, external sense, external object. Thirdly, none of the things mentioned in this chain of conjunctions is inherently 'spiritual' or endowed with consciousness. The body, like the external things of the world, is material of course. And so are the five external sense-organs, which are described as originating from the material elements (*bhuta*-s).[5] But what about *manas*, the internal sense-organ, which is often rendered as the 'mind'? It is not *bhautika* or made of physical elements. But there is no reason to view it as spiritual in nature. It is, on the contrary, as inert as any of the external sense-organs, though we need not go here into the question why

5. *NS* i.1.12.

the Nyaya-Vaisesikas feel the need of admitting this.[6]

With these points in mind, let us first see how S. N. Dasgupta sums up the Nyaya-Vaisesika view of soul and consciousness[7]:

> Knowledge (*jnana*) which illuminates all things is regarded only as a quality belonging to the soul, just as there are other qualities of the material objects. Causation is viewed merely as the collocation of conditions. The genesis of knowledge is also viewed as similar in nature to the production of any other physical event. Thus, just as by the collocation of certain physical circumstances a jug and its qualities are produced, so by the combination and respective contacts of the soul, mind (*manas*), sense and the objects of sense, knowledge (*jnana*) is produced. Soul with Nyaya is an inert unconscious entity in which knowledge etc. inhere.

If Dasgupta notes the peculiarly mechanical nature of the origin of consciousness in this view, Hiriyanna feels bewildered by its decisively materialist commitment. "We know", he observes, "the manner in which knowledge arises according to the Nyaya-Vaisesika, though it is hard to understand how when the aids to its genesis—the self, *manas*, senses and object—are wholly inert (*jada*), it can be knowledge at all."[8]

It is not difficult to see why this should appear so odd to Hiriyanna. Committed to the Vedanta idealism as he is, how can he reconcile himself to the possibility of the distinctly materialist suggestion that consciousness is secondary after all—a product of the peculiar conjunction of certain things that are inherently unconscious or *jada*? Yet that is exactly the position, as he rightly explains, which the Nyaya-Vaisesikas want us to accept.

At the same time, it is remarkable of an orthodoxy-oriented scholar like Hiriyanna to take an objective attitude to the real philosophical affiliation of the Nyaya-

6. It is mainly to explain the difference between attention and inattention.

7. Dasgupta i.367.

8. Hiriyanna 259-60.

Vaisesika position. Among the modern scholars he is about the only one to boldly draw our attention to the fact that the Nyaya-Vaisesika view of the origin of consciousness from things essentially unconscious is basically the same as that of the plain-speaking materialists. As he puts it,

"The position is scarcely distinguishable from that of the Carvakas."[9]

Such a comment, the truth of which is obvious, is also devastating. It is devastating not only for those modern interpretations of the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy who try somehow or other to bring it in harmony with the basically idealist trend of Indian thought but also for all the efforts of the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas themselves to erect some idealist superstructure on their own view of the self, particularly in connection with their concept of freedom or liberation.[10] This view of consciousness has a distinctly materialistic subsoil, rejecting and repelling idealism even from its safest resort, viz the soul. Whatever may be the reasons that lead the Nyaya-Vaisesikas to admit the soul, the fact is that the soul itself is conceived as inherently unconscious or *jada*, acquiring the attribute of consciousness only when conjoined to certain other unconscious entities, most of which are frankly material.

At the same time, the peculiar weakness of the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy from this point of view is not to be overlooked. If its general position demands the assertion that consciousness is produced from the inherently unconscious entities, it has no theoretical explanation to offer for such a possibility. No Nyaya-Vaisesika philosopher faces the question: How can consciousness emerge from the essentially unconscious? One obvious reason for this is their anxiety to dissociate from the plain-speaking materialists or Lokayatas, who of all the Indian

9. *Ib.* 260n.
10. The Nyaya-Vaisesika theory of freedom is to be discussed in Ch. 10.

philosophers boldly answer this question, in spite of their comparatively rudimentary understanding of the nature of matter. This anxiety is partly due to the fact that basing on their theory of the origin of consciousness the Lokayatas also reject the norm of the *varnasrama* or castebased society and hence become the main target of attack of the vested interests and their spokesmen, the Indian lawgivers. To be associated with the Lokayatas is therefore dangerous; to be disassociated with them means social security. Is it because of this that the Nyaya-Vaisesikas do what is theoretically the most strange thing for them? Rather than seeking support from the Lokayata view of the origin of consciousness, they tenaciously refute it.

Such inconsistencies apart, there is also a grave theoretical inadequacy of this philosophy which prevents it to work out a fuller understanding of the origin of consciousness from the inherently unconscious. It is its failure to relate motion to matter. Motion remains totally alien to matter—totally external to matter—so that change can be viewed only as the mechanical permutation and combination of the changeless atoms. In accordance with this mechanistic view, the combination of the unconscious entities producing consciousness is understood in the Nyaya-Vaisesika essentially on the model of the atomic conjunction. But what is it that produces these conjunctions? What is it that conjoins a soul to the body, and through it to the sense-organs and the objects? The Nyaya-Vaisesika has no answer to this, or the only answer it offers is completely alien to its own science-orientation. According to it the cause that produces these conjunctions is *adrsta*, 'the unseen'. Whatever may be its original significance, it comes to stand for a bundle of mere theologico-ethical ideas.

This failure of the Nyaya-Vaisesika to relate matter to motion is partially overcome by the Samkhyas, whose view of consciousness we now pass on to discuss.

3. Samkhya View of Consciousness

We have today a very dim and distant view of the original Samkhya, much of which is admittedly lost. Besides there are persistent efforts to twist and distort this philosophy so that it can somehow be forced into the idealist mould. Let us see what we can still make of its view of consciousness.

To begin with let us note some of the outstanding features of this philosophy judged from what is left of it. "This system", B. N. Seal[11] has observed, "possesses a unique interest in the history of thought as embodying the earliest clear and comprehensive account of the process of cosmic evolution." The fundamental stuff from which this evolution takes place is primeval matter—*pradhana* or *prakrti*. "This Matter", says Stcherbatsky[12], "is supposed to begin by an undifferentiated condition (*avyakta*) of equipoise and rest. Then an evolutionary process is started. Matter is then never at rest, always changing, changing every minute (*pratiksana-parinama*), but finally it again reverts to a condition of rest and equipoise. This Matter embraces not only the human body, but all our mental states as well, they are given a materialistic origin and essence." Stcherbatsky passes on to discuss certain other features of this philosophy, which we shall presently take up and see that they are really some weak points of the Samkhya in the form in which it has come down to us. Despite these, as Stcherbatsky[13] sums up, "But the idea of an eternal Matter which is never at rest, always evolving from one form into another, is a very strong point of the system, and it does credit to the philosophers of that school, that they at so early a date in the history of human thought so clearly formulated the idea of an eternal Matter which is never at rest."

Before proceeding further, let us briefly recapitulate this evolutionary process as visualised in the Samkhya.

11. Seal 3. 12. Stcherbatsky BL i.18. 13. *Ib.*

The primeval matter is conceived as containing the potentials of everything in the universe. Since everything in the universe is viewed as belonging to the three categories called sentience, energy and inertia, the primitive matter itself is supposed to be made of the potentials of these, which, in Samkhya terminology, are *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. So long as there is a perfect equilibrium of these, there is no evolutionary change. This pre-evolving stage of *pradhana* is called *avyakta* or 'the unmanifest'. With the loss of this equilibrium starts the evolutionary process. From the *avyakta,* first evolves *mahat* or *buddhi,* literally 'the great' or 'intelligence'. From Buddhi evolves *ahamkara,* the sense of the ego. From *ahamkara* evolve: (1) *manas* or 'mind', (2) five sense-organs or *jnan-endriya*-s, (3) five motor-organs or *karmendriya*-s, (4) five subtle elements or *tanmatra*-s and from the last of these evolves, (5) the five gross elements or *mahabhuta*-s, namely earth, water, fire, air and *akasa.*

It may not be easy for the modern mind to grasp all the successive stages of evolution thus conceived. As the oldest system of Indian thought, much of it is too archaic to be easily understood today. However, if what is already said of the Samkhya is all that this philosophy basically stands for, it can be easily considered as a grand system of speculative thought with a decisive commitment for materialism. But this is not so easy, for the philosophy apparently contains something more which does not agree with outright materialism. Over and above the *pradhana*, the Samkhyas assume a multiplicity of the *purusa*-s which, though literally meaning the male human beings, are usually interpreted as the eternal 'spirits' intrinsically conscious.

Hence the Samkhya philosophy is generally viewed as a form of rigid dualism—the philosophy of matter *and* spirit—rather than materialism pure and simple.

It is true, as Stcherbatsky[14] puts it, "The connection

14. *Ib.*

between this always changing Matter and the perfectly motionless Spirit is a very feeble point of the system. The Buddhists destroyed and ridiculed this artificially connected construction." In the *Nyayabindu,* Dharmakirti[15] illustrates the typical form of selfcontradictory argument—i.e. an argument in flagrant contradiction with one's accepted principle—with the Samkhya admission of the spirit. The place of the *purusa* in the Samkhya philosophy is thus anomalous; it cannot meet any genuine theoretical requirement of the philosophy.[16] The Samkhya would have been a far more consistent philosophy without the totally functionless *purusa.*

As against all these, Garbe, in accordance with the later idealism-tilted understanding of the Samkhya, tries to find definite theoretical justification for the admission of *purusa.* "What place, however, in a system which maintains such views is to be found for the soul? Strangely enough, former scholars who made exhaustive investigations into the Samkhya system did not succeed in answering this question. They regard the soul in this system as entirely superfluous, and hold that its founder would have shown himself more logical if he had altogether eliminated it."[17] Garbe himself argues that the most important function of the soul is "the illumination of the processes going on in the inner organ. All these processes must indeed remain purely mechanical and unconscious unless the soul, 'by virtue of its nearness', illuminates them, i.e. brings them to consciousness."[18] The basic assumption of such an understanding is that consciousness must be viewed as absolutely alien to matter or that from the merely material can never emerge consciousness. It is the assumption of the intrinsic impossibility of the materialist position. However it is precisely such an assumption that the Samkhya wants us to reject, inasmuch as it conceives the *sattva* or sentience-potential as one of the constituents of *pradhana*

15. *Ib.* ii.159ff & 203f.
16. Chattopadhyaya L 407ff.
17. Garbe in ERE xi.191.
18. *Ib.*

and makes *buddhi* or intelligence the first evolute of primeval matter.

It is true that the later commentators of the Samkhya, because of their own bias for the Vedanta, feel the same uneasiness about the main emphasis of this philosophy which Garbe echoes. Confronted with a thought that makes intelligence (*buddhi*), ego-sense (*ahamkara*), 'mind' etc.—in fact everything ordinarily considered psychical or spiritual—the products of primeval matter, they find some relief in its view of the *purusa*, which, standing eternally aloof from matter, is supposed to reserve the exclusive right to consciousness. The element of consciousness in everything psychical is thus conceived as nothing but the reflection of consciousness of the *purusa*—something borrowed from the spirit. Thus somehow or other is evaded the danger of making matter primary and spirit secondary, i.e. the danger of a materialist understanding of the Samkhya.

The enthusiasm of the later commentators of the Samkhya to emphasise the role of the *purusa*—and their anxiety to understand *purusa* in the sense of pure spirit from which everything in the world borrows its spirituality—is thus not difficult to understand. Still the question remains: How far is all this consistent with the genuinely theoretical position of the original Samkhya?

The question of original Samkhya is a troublesome one. Sukhlalji Sanghvi and S. N. Dasgupta suggest that the best source of its knowledge is the ancient medical treatise the *Caraka-samhita*. From its internal evidences, however, it appears that already during the compilation of this work there are conflicting opinions about the meaning of *purusa* in the Samkhya. An entire chapter of the work is designed to settle this question. We need not go into the detail of all this. What concerns us is the view of the *purusa* accepted by the *Caraka-samhita*.

Sukhlalji[19] suggests that according to the *Caraka-samhita*

19. Sanghavi *Adhyatma vicarana* (Hindi) 15-16.

the soul is only the product of *prakrti* and not something co-eternal with *prakriti*. This, in modern terminology, can only mean that the spirit is the product of matter, for *prakrti* simply means primeval matter.

The stage of this primeval matter, before being evolved in the form of the universe as we know it, is called *avyakta* or the 'unmanifest'. Dasgupta argues that *Caraka-samhita* admits no *purusa* except in the sense of this unmanifest stage of primeval matter. According to this interpretation also, *Caraka-samhita* is yet to accept any pure spirit apart from matter. We quote below some of the main points of Dasgupta's interpretation, which it may be interesting to compare with the Nyaya-Vaisesika view of the origin of consciousness already discussed:[20]

From other points of view, the categories may be said to be twentyfour only, viz the ten senses (five cognitive and five conative), *manas*, the five objects of senses and the eightfold *prakrti* (*prakrti*, *mahat*, *ahamkara* and the five elements). The manas works through the senses. It is atomic and its existence is proved by the fact that in spite of the existence of the senses there cannot be any knowledge unless *manas* is in touch with them... Each of the five senses is the product of the combination of five elements but the auditory sense is made with a preponderance of *akasa*, the sense of touch with a preponderance of air, the visual sense with a preponderance of light, the taste with a preponderance of water and the sense of smell with a preponderance of earth... The conglomeration of the sense-objects (*indriyartha*) or gross matter, the ten senses, *manas*, the five subtle *bhuta*-s and *prakrti* *mahat* and *ahamkara* taking place through *rajas* make up what we call man... The self is in itself without consciousness. Consciousness can only come to it through its connection with the sense organs and *manas*... Knowledge, feeling, or action cannot be produced without this combination... Caraka identifies the *avyakta* part of *prakrti* with *purusa* as forming one category... This *avyakta* and *cetana* are one and the same entity.

Dasgupta further argues,[21]

20. Dasgupta i.213.14.

21. *Ib.* i.216.

This account of Samkhya agrees with the system of Samkhya propounded by Pancasikha (who is said to be the direct pupil of Asuri, the pupil of Kapila or the founder of the system) in *Mahabharata* xii. 219. Pancasikha of course does not describe the system as elaborately as Caraka does. But even from what little he says, it may be supposed that the system of Samkhya he sketches is the same as that of Caraka. Pancasikha speaks of the ultimate truth as being *avyakta* (a term applied in all Samkhya literature to *prakrti*) in the state of *purusa* (*purusavastha-mavyaktam*).

Whether this version of the Samkhya that we have from the *Caraka-samhita* and Pancasikha represents the earliest available exposition of the Samkhya, as Dasgupta[22] suggests, may be an open question. But there can be no doubt on one point. In this version of the philosophy—which is certainly a very early one—there is no tendency to consider consciousness or spirit as primary. The tendency, on the contrary, is to view matter as primary and consciousness secondary.

Discarding this materialist proclivity of the early Samkhya, the later exponents of the philosophy want to twist it in the idealist direction by interpreting the *purusa* as pure spirit or pure consciousness (*cit*). However, since the conception of primeval matter in it is too firm to be done away with, what they at best achieve is to convert the philosophy into the rigid dualism of matter and spirit. For explaining the possible relation between the two, even they find it impossible to make matter secondary to the spirit. On the contrary, whatever influence the spirit is supposed to have on matter is conceived as a purely passive one, and even such passive influence is viewed as subject to the mediation of one of the three constituents or *guna*-s of primeval matter, viz the one that is called *sattva*. Thus the later interpreters of Samkhya are faced with the following question: "though *purusa* is pure intelligence, the *guna*-s are nonintelligent subtle substances, how can

22. *Ib.* i.217.

the latter come into touch with the former?"[23] To this, they answer:[24]

One class of the *guna*-s called *sattva* is such that it resembles the purity and the intelligence of the *purusa* to a very high degree, so much so that it can reflect the intelligence of the *purusa* and thus render its nonintelligent transformations to appear as if they were intelligent. Thus all our thoughts and other emotional and volitional operations are really the nonintelligent transformations of the *buddhi* or *citta* having a large *sattva* preponderance; but by virtue of the reflection of the *purusa* in the *buddhi*, these appear as if they are intelligent."

Such theoretical constructions, the later interpreters of Samkhya may feel, help them to avoid the dangers of outright materialism; but it is a different question altogether as to how far they help or hinder the internal consistency of the philosophy itself.

That all this actually damages the internal consistency of the philosophy can be seen from certain other circumstances. How is the *purusa* related to the cosmic evolution, the basic theme of the Samkhya? As the ever-detached consciousness, *purusa* has actually nothing to do with the process of this evolution; nevertheless *purusa* cannot be totally irrelevant to the whole thing. So the *Samkhya-karika* which gives us a comparatively later version of the philosophy, wants to make the *purusa* somehow or other responsible for the superintendence of the evolution of primeval matter. But direct or active superintendence is inconceivable within even the minimum residue of the Samkhya position. So the conception of some kind of totally passive superintendence has to be improvised, and this is done on the analogy of the lame and the blind: sitting on the shoulder of the blind, the lame does not himself move, and yet he can direct the movement of the blind, passively though. But it is easy for the opponents of the Samkhya—like Samkara—to ridicule such an explanation, for the analogy is clearly inappropriate inasmuch as the

23. *Ib.* i.259. 24. *Ib.* i.259-60.

superintendence of the lame over the blind is not really passive. Besides, as Samkara argues, "this, your new position involves an abandonment of your old position according to which the *pradhana* is moving of itself and the indifferent and inactive soul possesses no moving power."[25]

Similar is the difficulty this new version of the philosophy has to face while trying to invent a plausible purpose served for the ever-aloof soul by the evolution of matter. The *Samkhya-karika* declares that this evolution is for the purpose of the enjoyment of *purusa;* but it also declares that this purpose is the liberation of the *purusa.* The two purposes, thus conceived, go against each other. If the primeval matter is real and its modification a real process (*parinama,* as contrasted with *vivarta* or illusory modification of Advaita Vedanta), the alleged involvement in it of the soul has also to be conceived as real; it cannot vanish into nothingness with the dawn of philosophical wisdom. Such a claim is perfectly consistent with extreme idealism like Sunya-vada and Maya-vada. To force the Samkhya philosophy into the same mould requires the complete elimination from it of the principle of *pradhana.* This, even the later interpreters of the philosophy cannot manage, because Samkhya is nothing if not the philosophy of the *pradhana.* And yet the *Samkhya-karika* wants somehow or other to graft this essentially idealist conception of liberation on what is basically the philosophy of primeval matter in eternal motion.

Is it because of all this that, during the later period of the maturer philosophical activities, no important Indian philosopher cares to defend the philosophy already made inconsistent by its new understanding of the *purusa*? The possibility cannot be ruled out, because the reformed Samkhya as we have it from the *Samkhya-karika* onwards is a philosophy with its old vitality largely drained out. The admission of the spirit in the

25. Samkara on *Br. Su.* ii.2.7.

Vedantic or near-Vedantic sense evidently means a fatal setback for it. Only the relic of the ancient theory of evolution is left behind, and this is utilised mainly by the Advaita Vedantists to account for the illusory transformation (*vivarta*) of the pure spirit into the material world.

Philosophically speaking, all this is possible because none of the later followers of the Samkhya has the boldness to claim that consciousness can emerge from unconscious matter, so that it is not theoretically obligatory to conceive a spirit, from which the evolutes of matter can borrow some kind of reflected consciousness. For this boldness of theoretical formulation, the antithesis of idealism is indebted to the Lokayatas.

4. Lokayata View of Consciousness

In his commentary on the *Brahma-sutra,* Samkara thrice refers to the Lokayata view to show—and then refute—its theory of soul and consciousness. We may conveniently begin our discussion of the Lokayata view of consciousness with one of these, particularly because it is of interest for what we have just discussed. It shows that, as understood by Samkara, the Lokayata view is so near the Samkhya that the latter can as well try to substantiate itself with the same line of argument that the Lokayatas are supposed to follow. Thus, in the course of his refutation of the Samkhya view, after arguing that the orderly arrangement of the world cannot be explained on the assumption that it is the product of unconscious matter or *pradhana,* Samkara continues[26]:

Leaving the evidence of the orderly arrangement of the world, we now pass on to the activity by which it is produced. On this, the Samkhya position is: The three *guna*-s, with their original equilibrium upset and entering into the condition of mutual subordination and super-

26. *Ib.* ii.2.2. Free translation.

ordination, originate activities tending towards the production of particular effects.

Against this, Samkara argues: Now these activities cannot be ascribed to the unconscious *pradhana* left to itself, as no such activity is seen in the clay and similar substances, or in chariots and the like. We observe that the clay and the like, and chariots—which are inherently unconscious—enter on activities tending towards particular effects only when they are acted upon by conscious agents like the potters etc. and the horses etc. The nature of the unobserved is to be determined on the basis of what is actually observed. Hence cannot be inferred an unconscious cause of the world, which leaves unexplained the activity needed for its production.

Samkhya rejoins: Activity of the merely conscious is also never observed.

Samkara: True; but we observe activity of the unconscious things like the chariot etc., only when these are in conjunction with conscious agents.

Samkhya: We never actually observe activity of the conscious itself even when conjoined with unconscious things.

Samkara: Very well. The question, then, is: Does activity belong to that in which it is actually observed (as the Samkhya claims), or to that on account of the conjunction with which it is observed (as the Vedanta claims)?

Samkhya: It is logical to attribute activity to that in which it is actually observed, because both (i.e. the activity as well as its substratum) are directly perceived. By contrast, the merely conscious is never observed as the substratum of activity, like for example the chariot observed. Thus is proved that the conscious exists only as connected with the body etc., which, in its turn, is the real substratum of activity, inasmuch as it is observed that the living body is basically different from the merely unconscious things, like the chariots etc. It is because of this, viz that consciousness is observed only when there is a visible body while it (i.e. consciousness) is never observed in the absence of a visible body, that the Lokayatas also claim, that consciousness belongs to the body. Hence activity belongs only to the unconscious.

The entire drift of this argument attributed by Samkara to the Samkhyas is remarkably materialist. And, as if to

leave nothing vague about his own understanding of the Samkhya, Samkara says that the Samkhyas—in defence of their own position—are obliged to depend on the well-known Lokayata argument proving that consciousness is only an attribute of the body, knowing full well that from the point of view of Indian orthodoxy nothing is more outrageous than to quote the authority of the Lokayata. Does Samkara say all this simply to vilify the Samkhya, or is it because as an extreme idealist he feels that notwithstanding the later graft of a spiritualist understanding of the *purusa*, the Samkhya philosophy cannot outgrow its original commitment to materialism? I have elsewhere tried to discuss this question and have argued that throughout his commentary on the *Brahma-sutra*, Samkara wants to contest the Samkhya philosophy as an essentially materialist one, so that in accordance with his own understanding of it there is really nothing incongruous for the Samkhya to lean on the outspoken materialism of the Lokayatas.[27]

Bue let us return to the Lokayata position and see how it is defended by its followers, We have, for this purpose, to depend primarily on the writings of their opponents.

Samkara[28] observes, "The vulgar mob (*prakrta-jana*) as well as the Lokayatikas consider the soul to be nothing but the body with the attribute of consciousness." He describes their arguments as follows:

The Lokayatikas, who see the soul in the body itself, argue that there is nothing called soul apart from the body. According to them, consciousness—though not observed in the material elements like earth etc. either in their separateness or in their mere togetherness—does emerge in them when transformed into the form of the body, and hence consciousness originates only from them. Consciousness is thus like the intoxicating power of the alcoholic

27. Chattopadhyaya L ch. 6. cf. Dasgupta iii.527; the Jaina philosopher Silanka also claims that there is but negligible difference between Samkhya and Lokayata, for the admission of *purusa* in the former is only nominal.

28. Samkara on *Br.Su.* i.1.1.

drink, though it is produced from certain ingredients none of which has the intoxicating power. Man is nothing but body qualified by consciousness. There is thus, according to them, no soul separate from the body capable of going to heaven or of obtaining liberation, because of the presence of which in the body the body is supposed to acquire consciousness. On the contrary, the body itself is conscious; it is the soul. In the *Brahma-sutra*, the argument in defence of this Lokayata view is stated as: On account of its existence where a body is.' Wherever something exists if some other thing also exists, and does not exist if that other thing does not exist, we determine the former to be a mere quality of the latter. Thus, for example, heat and light are determined to be qualities of fire. And since life, volition, consciousness, remembrance and so on—which, by the upholders of an independent soul are considered to be the qualities of the soul—are observed only as confined to the body and never outside the body, and since any substratum of these qualities outside the body cannot be proved, it follows that these must be the qualities of the body only. Therefore the soul is not different from the body.[29]

Let us first try to be clear about the main points of the argument. The Lokayata denial of the soul is confronted with the problem of consciousness, the fact of which it is impossible to doubt but the usual assumption about which is that it is the differentia of the spirit or soul. Something just material, like a lump of clay, is intrinsically unconscious, while only the living beings—because they are endowed with the soul or spirit—are found to be conscious. Accordingly, the main point of the Lokayata argument is the rejection of this assumption that consciousness is the characteristic peculiarity of the spirit. The argument for this rejection has two steps. First, to prove that far from being the characteristic peculiarity of the spirit, consciousness is only a quality or attribute of the mere body, i.e. purely in its physical sense. Secondly, to offer a theoretical explanation of the fact that though the body is made of material elements alone, there is really no mystery about the emergence of consciousness in it. From the point of view of materialism, the second of these two arguments is

29. *Ib.* iii.3.53. Free tr.

crucial and we shall presently see its importance for Indian science. However the first argument also is not without significance.

What, then, is the main point of the first argument intended to prove that consciousness is only a quality or attribute of the body? Though Samkara speaks here of the relation of body and consciousness as that of the substance and its quality, in this particular context the substance-quality relation is only a form of causal relation, for the Lokayata view is that when the material elements assume the form of the living body, consciousness is produced in it. Thus, in this view, the body is the cause and consciousness is its effect. We can, therefore, better understand the actual force of the Lokayata argument if we follow the Indian norm of establishing the causal relation between two phenomena and see how far it is followed for establishing the same relation between body and consciousness.

In Indian terminology, this is to show the *anvaya* supplemented by *vyatireka*—roughly meaning 'universal co-presence' supplemented by 'universal co-absence'—between the two things. *Anvaya* means: the cause being present, the effect is present; wherever there is the cause there is also the effect. Thus, to prove that fire-cum-wet-fuel is the cause of smoke, one has first of all to show that wherever there is fire-cum-wet-fuel, there is smoke. Similarly, to prove that body is the cause of consciousness, one has first to show that wherever there is body there is consciousness.

However, as Vacaspati Misra[30] puts it, mere invariable co-presence of two things does not necessarily prove causal connection between them. Thus empty space or *akasa* is admitted to be invariably co-present with everything in the world. In spite of this, none can claim that empty space is the cause of everything in the world. Hence for the purpose of establishing causal connection between two

30. *Bhamati* iii.3.53.

things, this evidence of their *anvaya* has to be supplemented by the further evidence of their *vyatireka*.

Vyatireka means, when the cause is absent the effect also is necessarily absent. Thus, for example, in the absence of fire-cum-wet-fuel there is necessarily the absence of smoke. If there be smoke in spite of the absence of fire-cum-wet-fuel, the latter cannot be conceived as the cause of smoke. Therefore, for the purpose of establishing the causal relation between body and consciousness, it has to be further shown that wherever there is the absence of body there is also the absence of consciousness, or, in other words, there can never be consciousness without the body.

As Samkara puts it, the Lokayata position is supposed to be based on both these evidences. Thus: (1) Wherever there is body, there is also consciousness (*anvaya*), and (2) wherever there is the absence of body, there is also the absence of consciousness (*vyatireka*).

However even admitting that the evidence of *anvaya* substantiated by *vyatireka* leads one to admit that the body is the cause of consciousness—or that consciousness is only an attribute of the body—the whole thing can appear as highly mysterious. The Lokayatas claim that the body is purely material, i.e. made of nothing but the material elements like earth etc. Admitting this there is no explanation of the fact of its being endowed with consciousness. What is decisive about these material elements is the want of consciousness. Earth etc., examined both separately as well as in combination with each other, are palpably unconscious and so must be anything produced by them. If, therefore, they alone are the constituents of the body, its consciousness remains unexplained.

From the Lokayata point of view, therefore, the really vital problem is a different one. Can the material elements alone, in spite of each of them being intrinsically unconscious, go to the making of living bodies possessing consciousness? Can, in other words, consciousness emerge from unconscious matter?

This is precisely the point that the Lokayatas argue. Consciousness can certainly be the product of matter. When we look back at these ancient materialists, their understanding of the nature of matter cannot but appear as extremely rudimentary. Nor do we expect of them any real knowledge of the central nervous system—particularly of the brain—on the strength of which the modern materialists can argue the same point. The scientific data at the disposal of our Lokayatas, judged by modern standards, are meagre indeed. It is, therefore, all the more remarkable that in spite of these severe limitations, under which they are historically obliged to work, they do make a bold theoretical attempt at an explanation of the origin of consciousness from matter, and, among the representatives of the antithesis of Indian idealism, they alone make such an attempt. From the way in which Samkara depicts their position, the salient points of this attempt are as follows.

The origin of consciousness from material elements, each of which is by itself unconscious or devoid of consciousness, appears impossible because of one assumption. It is the assumption that an altogether new quality can never emerge from some peculiar combination and transformation of certain things that are by themselves distinctly without this quality, i.e. are positively known not to have it. But such an assumption is itself an undue one. The fact, on the contrary, is that there are definitely observed cases of the emergence of altogether new qualities from the peculiar transformation of things without these qualities. As the most typical case of such observation, the Lokayatas mention the following. None of the ingredients used to prepare the alcoholic drink possesses the quality called 'intoxicating power' (*mada-sakti*). Yet when these same ingredients are combined and transformed in a special way we get the alcoholic drink *with its intoxicating power*. Evidently, the Lokayatas do not know the full explanation of such a fact, though, as we shall presently see, the way in which they want to understand it has a unique interest in the history of science. No less remarkable for the history

of thought is the fact that, at such an early period to which the origin of the Lokayata is traced, these materialists extend the theoretical implications of this observation of the origin of the 'intoxicating power' to the explanation of the origin of consciousness from matter. If the emergence of this intoxicating power from the peculiar transformation of things without it is not a mystery, there is no ground for rejecting the possibility of the origin of consciousness from the material elements. On the contrary, the origin of consciousness from the peculiar transformation of the unconscious material elements can be easily understood on the basis of the actual observation of the origin of the intoxicating power from the peculiar transformation of its nonintoxicating ingredients.

This is the most vital point on which the Lokayata position hinges. However, before we proceed to discuss its significance for the history of science and philosophy, it is necessary to have another clarification.

The actual writings of the Lokayatas are lost to us. In such a circumstance, we could have perhaps doubted the objectivity of Samkara's presentation of the Lokayata position had Samkara been the only opponent of the Lokayatas to have thus described it. But a considerable number of responsible representatives of other philosophies also give us the same account of the Lokayata view of consciousness, though of course for the purpose of refuting it. At least, the observation of the emergence of *madasakti* or intoxicating power—on the basis of which this view of consciousness is ultimately argued—is invariably mentioned in practically all the accounts of the Lokayata position that we have from the Indian philosophers of the maturer period. We are thus obliged to admit that Samkara's summary which we have quoted, represents some kind of standard understanding of the Lokayata view in the Indian philosophical literature. This point is important not only because Rhys Davids[31] strongly doubts

31. Rhys Davids DB ii.171.

the veracity of Samkara's account of the Lokayata view of consciousness, but more particularly because—as we shall presently see—it proves extremely difficult for the other philosophers to refute the view thus understood. It is, therefore, desirable for us to have some more idea of how other philosophers describe the Lokayata view of consciousness, though this will mean considerable repetition.

The Jaina philosopher Haribhadra[32], in his compendium of Indian philosophy, describes the position of the Lokayatas as follows:

The Lokayatas say that there is nothing called soul, liberation, virtue and vice resulting from pious and impious actions... That which is past can never return. The body is just a combination of the four material elements, which are earth, water, fire and air. These are the basis of consciousness, i.e. that from which consciousness originates. Perception alone is the valid source of knowledge. The combination of the material elements like earth etc. results in the body; just as from the ingredients of preparing alcoholic drink originates the intoxicating power, so also originates soul (i.e. consciousness) (from the material elements combined to form the body). Therefore, the Carvakas claim that it is a folly to renounce what is actually observed (like the pleasures of this world) for running after what is never observed (like heavenly pleasure).

Gunaratna, a late commentator of Haribhadra, gives the most elaborate account of the Lokayata denial of the soul for the purpose of completely refuting it. This account is so full of the technicalities of Indian logic that we are easily led to presume that much of it is drawn from his own head. In other words, being himself highly skilled in logic, Gunaratna wants to show in this account how he can himself argue for the defence of the Lokayata view rather than how the Lokayatas themselves argue. However, even admitting all this, it is significant that elsewhere in the same commentary Gunaratna puts the Lokayata position more in conformity with its standard understanding[33]:

In this view, consciousness originates from the material

32. Haribhadra *SDS* verses 80-86. 33. Gunaratna on *SDS* 80-86.

elements in the way in which originates the intoxicating power. Living being is like a bubble in water. The human being is nothing but the body endowed with consciousness... There is nothing called soul with the characteristic of consciousness and capable of migrating to the other world. Consciousness is the product of the five material elements: hence it is destroyed with the destruction of (the combination of) these elements. Therefore, migration to the other world is absurd. The body made of earth etc.—i.e. of the elements called earth, water, fire and air—is endowed with consciousness. Just as the intoxicating power originates only from the molasses, metals, etc., so also consciousness originates in the body. In this view, the word self or *atman* means the body and not soul. The body is made of the combination of the material elements and in this body exists consciousness... Just as the intoxicating power emerges in the ingredients of alcoholic drink, so also the sense of the self and consciousness emerge in the body resulting from the combination of the material elements. As Brhaspati says, 'Earth, water, air and fire—these alone are real. The products of their combination are known as body, objects and senses. Consciousness belongs only to them.'

The Buddhist philosophers Santaraksita and his commentator Kamalasila give a very elaborate and highly scholastic account of the Lokayata view as their *purva-paksa*. Much of this scholasticism is evidently their own creation rather than an objective compilation of what the Lokayatas say, because there is no reason to think that the Lokayatas are interested in this kind of scholasticism. However even these scholastic considerations which, according to Santaraksita and Kamalasila can be offered in defence of the Lokayata view, rest ultimately on one point. It is the instance of *mada-sakti* or intoxicating power.

As Santaraksita[34] puts it, "Therefore, from certain specific material elements originates consciousness (knowledge), and it resides in these, just like fermented acid (*sukta*) and alcohol (*sura*)."

Jayanta Bhatta[35], one of the foremost representatives of the Nyaya-Vaisesika view, says:

34. Santaraksita *TS* 1859.

35. Jayanta Bhatta *NM* ii.3.

The Lokayatikas, who deny the other world, argue that there exists no soul apart from the body in which consciousness is found embedded... Because of some peculiar transformation, the material elements themselves acquire a great deal of power or potency and as such become endowed with consciousness, i.e. knowledge or consciousness originates only in them. Just as molasses, rice-powder etc., though formerly devoid of intoxicating power, acquire the intoxicating power when transformed into alcoholic drink, so also the material elements, though without consciousness in their former state of earth, etc., acquire consciousness when transformed into the body.

Vacaspati Misra,[36] the versatile exponent of so many philosophical views, explains the Lokayata position:

Though both in the form of their isolation and in the form of a mere jumbling up of these, earth, water, fire and air are observed to be without consciousness, yet, when transformed into the body, they get endowed with consciousness, just as the ferments and other ingredients of the alcoholic drink do not, either in their isolation or in the form of a mere jumbling up, do not possess the intoxicating power, yet, when transformed into the alcoholic drink, the same ingredients acquire the intoxicating power.

In accordance with this persistent understanding of the Lokayata position on the part of the representatives of diverse philosophies, Madhava, in his *Sarvadarsana-samgraha,* gives us essentially the same impression of it. In substantiation of this, he quotes certain 'authentic popular verses' explaining the basic point of the Lokayatas in non-technical terms. One of them is: "Earth, air, fire and water—only these material elements are real. From these material elements originates consciousness, just as the intoxicating power originates from the ferments etc."[37]

5. Theoretical Significance of the Lokayata View

We have quoted the representatives of diverse philosophies repeating practically the same thing, because we want to

36. *Bhamati* iii.3.53.

37 Madhava *SDS* 3.

establish one point. At the present stage of research, our knowledge of the Lokayatas is imperfect and there are uncertainties about some aspects of their views. Nevertheless, without rejecting something persistently asserted in the Indian philosophical tradition, it is impossible to question one point. Their sharp attack on the norm of the caste-divided or *varnasrama* society has for its theoretical foundation the denial of the soul, or, to put it positively, the identification of the body with the self (*dehatmavada*). This, in its turn, is proved with the claim that consciousness is just a product of matter. But how can the intrinsically unconscious matter produce consciousness? The Lokayatas answer that there is no mystery about it, for it is just like intoxicating power being produced from the nonintoxicating ingredients of alcoholic drink. It is ultimately on this example of *mada-sakti* that everything else that the Lokayatas say is based.

Therefore, for the theoretical assessment of the Lokayata position, it is necessary to be clear about the importance of this example itself. And the first thing to be noted is that for the general history of science the way in which the Lokayatas look at this example—or, in modern terminology, at the phenomena of fermentation and distillation—is remarkably important.

But what exactly does this mean? Does it mean that our Lokayatas attain the knowledge of the scientific laws underlying the processes of fermentation and distillation? Evidently not. It is well-known that the process of fermentation is understood only in the second half of the 19th century, thanks mainly to the epoch-making observations and experiments of Pasteur.[38] Ancient though the technique of distillation is, the first rough understanding of the process itself cannot be traced earlier than the 18th century.[39] It is obvious that our Lokayatas do not know all this. But that is not the main thing in their scientific

38. Bernal 647. 39. *Ib.* 323f.

assessment. It is remarkable because of another consideration. For all that we know about the history of science, they are the first to scrap the ancient animistic understanding of fermentation and distillation—an understanding which still lingers in the English language when the strong alcoholic drink is called 'spirit'. Westermarck[40] explains the nature of this understanding: "Wine or spirituous liquor inspires mysterious fear. The abnormal mental state which it produces suggests the idea that there is something supernatural in it, that it contains a spirit or is perhaps itself a spirit." Even in the 16th-century European science, distillation means the capture of spirit. Bernal describes this view as maintained by Paracelsus (1493-1541): "The crucial process of chemistry, distillation, was essentially a means of capturing the invisible spirits that rose from a boiling liquid. That such spirits were indeed powerful was only too evident from the effect of drinking them."[41] Even to van Helmont (1577-1644), what is found in the brewer's vats is one of the 'wild untamable spirits'.[42] The counterpart of this ancient animistic understanding of alcoholic drinks is easily traced in ancient India[43] also, though Kautilya[44] is free from it. It is, therefore, extremely remarkable that in a fairly ancient period[45] our Lokayatas take a fully naturalistic view of fermentation and distillation and discard the 'spiritual' view of it, which even 17th-century European science has to outgrow. In the Lokayata view there is nothing mysterious about the origin of the intoxicating power. It is just a product of some peculiar transformation of certain nonintoxicating ingredients used by the brewer; and that is all.

The theoretical significance of such a view for the history of Indian science can, therefore, by no means be ig-

40. Westermarck quoted in ERE v. 79. 41. Bernal 399.
42. *Ib.* 439 & 620. 43. e.g. the Vedic view of *soma*.
44. Kautilya *AS* ii.25.16-39.
45. Though the Lokayata view is pre-Buddha, the exact date of the use of the observation of *mada-sakti* is not known. The popular verses mentioning it are presumably ancient.

nored. It is thus strange to read in *A Concise History of Science in India* a peculiar comment about the Lokayatas: "In the present state of our knowledge, it is not possible to say whether these unorthodox schools of thought had any effect on the progress of science and secular learning."[46] The purely naturalistic view of fermentation and distillation, which the Lokayatas indisputably take, is by itself an evidence calling for an amendment of the comment.

But this is not all that the Lokayatas have to say. They mention this naturalistic understanding of the origin of the intoxicating power in defence of a similar naturalistic understanding of the origin of consciousness. And this makes their place in the history of Indian science all the more remarkable. Not that they are in a position to work out the scientific details explaining the origin of consciousness, the problem of which is connected with that of the origin of life. Still, what the Lokayatas have to say about it is extremely important, because it means *the foundation of the theoretical position only on the basis of which science can move forward in its quest of further detail.*

If contemporary science has stripped off the mystical veil on the problem of life and consciousness—which undoubtedly it has done—this progress could only be possible because of the basic assumption that life—and therefore also consciousness—originates from inorganic matter. Further, the biggest ideological obstacle that has to be overcome for this progress of knowledge is the mystical-religious assumption of a soul over and above the body which, in its theologico-philosophical form, is called vitalism—the assumption of some mysterious 'life force' for the generation of organisms. Darwinian evolution gives a heavy blow to this, not only because, according to it, "all that it was necessary to generate was the primitive organism: the others could be evolved from it", but further because Darwin himself conceives the possibility of the primitive

46. Bose, Sen & Subbarayappa 32.

organism arising from matter. "It is often said", observes Darwin, "that all the conditions for the first production of a living organism are now present, which could ever have been present. But if (and oh! what a big if) we could conceive in some warm little pond with all sorts of ammonia and phosphoric salts, light, heat, electricity, etc., present, that a protein compound was chemically formed ready to undergo still more complex changes, at the present day, such matter would be instantly devoured or absorbed, which would not have been the case before living creatures were formed."[47] For a long time after Darwin, however, the question of the origin of life is pushed outside the regular biological discussion, mainly because of its open conflict with the very basis of religious conviction, namely the belief in the soul. Only in the twenties of this century Oparin and Haldane reopen the question and put forward the hypothesis of the biochemical origin of life; in recent years the pace of the progress of knowledge of the origin of life from inorganic matter has tremendously increased.[48]

What contemporary science has to say about life is very far indeed from the Lokayata claim that life and consciousness originate from some peculiar combination and transformation of the four physical elements—earth, water, fire and air. Philosophically speaking, however, it is more important to see where exactly the Lokayata view differs from the contemporary scientific one. This difference, rightly analysed, resolves itself into one point, namely the difference in the knowledge of the nature of matter. The contemporary understanding of matter is so enormously advanced than the rather naive ideas of the four elements that it is something like the latest automobile compared to the ancient Vedic chariots. Nevertheless it is from matter that the origin of life and consciousness is sought to be explained. From this point of view, the contemporary understanding of the origin of life and

47. Quoted by Morgulis in intro. to Oparin p. x.
48. Bernal 986-7.

consciousness has a basic theoretical resemblance to the position of the Lokayatas. Life and consciousness are products of matter, howsoever enriched the contemporary understanding of matter may be.

6. Is Lokayata View Refuted in Indian Philosophy?

But let us return to discuss the theoretical significance of the Lokayata view in its specific Indian context. And the most important question in this connection is: Is the Lokayata view of the origin of consciousness really refuted in Indian philosophy? That it is attacked by many Indian philosophers is of course indisputable. Some of them go into very elaborate polemics against it with the most spectacular scholasticism. These are facts that can by no means be doubted. Still the question remains: How far do they succeed in theoretically rejecting the Lokayata view?

The Lokayata view of the origin of consciousness, because of its scientific potential, has a great deal of substance in it. To reject it—and make the rejection theoretically adequate—is not so easy as is ordinarily assumed. In spite of the occasional use of filthy language[49] as well as the show of some imposing scholasticism against the Lokayatas, their basic position that consciousness is the product of matter remains largely unaffected even in the norm of Indian logic, while some of the allegedly empirical evidences advanced against them cannot stand the test of further progress of empirical evidence itself. We can see this if we examine the more typical theoretical considerations with which the Lokayata view is sought to be rejected.

It may be convenient to begin with Samkara, whose polemics against the Lokayatas contain most of the typical objections raised by the other philosophers against the materialists. Here are the main points of this polemics:[50]

49. Jayanta Bhatta and Gunaratna call them naive fools (*varaka*) and Vacaspati Misra describes them as 'more beastly than the beasts' (*pasunam api pasavah*).

50. Samkara on *Br.Su.* iii.3.54.

The non-difference (i.e. the identity) between the body and the soul is not logically tenable. It is logical instead to view the soul as distinct from the body. And the reason for this is: the absence of its alleged quality in spite of its presence. The alleged quality of the body, i.e. consciousness, is observed to be absent in spite of the presence of the body itself. Thus on the basis of the observation of the presence of the qualities of the soul during the presence of the body, it is claimed that these qualities belong to the body. However, if so, what prevents you to admit that these qualities are qualities of something other than the body, when you actually observe that these are absent in spite of the presence of the body? It is reasonable to admit this because of the characteristic difference between the qualities of the soul and the qualities that belong genuinely to the body. Thus, so long as the body is present, let the genuine qualities of the body like complexion, etc. be also present. Still, after death, the qualities like life, volition, etc. are not present in spite of the presence of the body. Besides the qualities of the body like complexion etc. are perceived by others. But not so are the qualities of the soul, like consciousness and memory.

Explaining the last point, Vacaspati Misra says that because the psychical qualities are open only to introspection, they could not be the qualities of the body—like complexion—which are directly perceived by others.

With this explanation in mind, let us first try to be clear about the main points of Samkara's arguments against the Lokayatas.

Its basic assumption as well as the salient details are evidently borrowed by him from the Nyaya-Vaisesikas though, as we shall presently see, not without a disaster for the inner-consistency of his own philosophical position. The assumption is that consciousness etc. have the ontological status of 'qualities' or attributes and, as qualities, these cannot belong to the body, which is crassly physical. In the history of Indian philosophy such an assumption is typical of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas who, because of this assumption, are led to admit the existence of a soul as distinct from the body. Thus they feel that attachment, aversion, motivation, pleasure, pain and consciousness are

qualities after all and, being distinctly psychical, these qualities cannot belong to anything merely physical, like the body. To account for the fact of such qualities being there, they find it necessary to admit some substance other than the body. This substance is called by them the soul.[51]

Nevertheless, conscientious observers as they are, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas cannot ignore the fact that these qualities are transient after all. They originate only under certain specific conditions, with the dissolution of which they are also dissolved. Hence, in their view, these qualities have nothing to do with the intrinsic nature of the soul. The soul, in spite of being inferred from the evidence of consciousness etc., is itself an inert and unconscious entity, i.e. in Indian terminology, something *jada*—actually compared to a lump of stone (*sila-sakala-kalpa*).[52]

The resulting position is peculiarly anomalous. Though the Nyaya-Vaisesikas argue that for the explanation of the overtly spiritual qualities, it is logically obligatory to admit some substance other than the merely material body, the substance thus admitted cannot be inherently spiritual. On the contrary, it somehow or other remains closer to the material and at the same time is supposed to explain the fact of the spiritual qualities.

Apparently, Samkara is not bothered by such an anomaly in the Nyaya-Vaisesika position, from which he borrows practically everything for his own refutation of the Lokayatas. The decisive point, he says, is that consciousness etc. cannot be accepted as the qualities of the body. For the purpose of proving this, he reiterates in a rather popular form two arguments already offered by Gotama and Vatsyayana who, unlike Samkara, go into greater intricacies of the questions involved.

First, wherever body exists, the purely physical qualities like complexion etc. also exist. There can be no case of the presence of body along with the absence of complexion. But this is not true of qualities like consciousness. There

51. *NS* i.1.10.

52. Stcherbatsky CBN 97.

are cases of the presence of body along with the absence of consciousness. The most obvious example of this is that of the corpse where, in spite of the presence of body, consciousness is totally absent. This is nothing but reiterating an argument of Gotama which, as explained by Vatsyayana, is: "A body is never perceived without complexion etc. However a body is sometimes perceived without consciousness. Therefore consciousness is not a quality of the body."[53]

Secondly, the merely physical qualities like complexion are open to direct observation by others while consciousness is known by introspection alone. This, again, is a repetition in a simplified form of what Gotama argues. As explained by Vatsyayana, the argument is: "The qualities of body are of two kinds only, viz (1) imperceptible, like heaviness, and (2) perceptible by external senses, e.g. complexion etc. Consciousness differs from both these kinds: it is not imperceptible for it is internally apprehended, and it is not perceptible by the external senses, for it is an object known by the mind only. Therefore consciousness is a quality of some substance other than the body."[54]

Before proceeding further let us note one point. Plagiarising certain readymade arguments of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas may simplify Samkara's purpose of refuting the Lokayata view; but this also creates a grave risk for the internal consistency of his own philosophical position, according to which consciousness is the very essence of the soul and not a mere quality of a distinct substance called the soul. It is true, as Stcherbatsky[55] has observed, that there is "a method very much in vogue among the Indian pandits" of arguing not *svamatena* or in accordance with one's own views, but *paramatam asritya*, i.e. on the basis of others' views. However the legitimacy of this method is itself questionable for, if extensively practised, its result can only be arguments for the sake of mere arguments,

53. Vatsyayana on *NS* iii.2.47.
54. *Ib.* on iii.2.53.
55. Stcherbatsky CBN 63n.

i.e. without the purpose of ultimately arriving at some self-consistent or coherent conclusion—a philosophical performance denounced in the Indian tradition as sheer destructive criticism or *vitanda*.[56] The method is particularly repulsive when, for the purpose of refuting an opponent, one argues on the basis of some view that is destructive of one's own position—as is Samkara's effort to refute the Lokayata on the basis of the Nyaya-Vaisesika. The arguments used by Samkara presuppose that consciousness is only a transitory quality of an inert substance—a presupposition that completely negates the very essence of Samkara's philosophy, viz that the ultimate reality is the soul identified with mere consciousness. In other words, even admitting that the arguments offered by Samkara are logically adequate for refuting the Lokayata view, we have to admit further that they are also adequate to reject Samkara's own view.

But let us leave the question of selfconsistency of Samkara. Let us take up the more important question concerning the intrinsic worth of these arguments for the refutation of materialism.

To begin with, there is at least some apparent difficulty in reconciling the two evidences supposed to prove that consciousness is a quality of something else than the body. If emphasis is put on the second of these two arguments—i.e. if it is claimed that consciousness is known by introspection alone as contrasted with physical qualities known by direct observation—it becomes difficult to stick to the first of these arguments, namely that, though the physical qualities exist as long as the body exists, in the case of the corpse there is the absence of consciousness in spite of the presence of the body. There are well-known difficulties in proving with the aid of introspection alone the presence of consciousness in others while they are alive and the absence of consciousness in them when they are dead. The evidence can only be circumstantial or inferential. But

56. *NS* i.2.3.

there would be controversies again about the nature of this inferential evidence, for, in the Indian view, at least the standard forms of inference presuppose direct or perceptual knowledge. Assuming the exclusive relevance of introspection for the knowledge of consciousness, what one can directly affirm is the existence of consciousness in oneself only so long as one is alive. On the same assumption, it is difficult to affirm even the nonexistence of consciousness in oneself when one is dead, for the introspective search of consciousness on the part of the corpse does not arise.

Not that there can be no answer to these difficulties. But let us not digress into the scholastic details of all that. For the purpose of the refutation of the Lokayata view, the second of the two grounds under discussion is not so vital as the first one. Let us see why.

According to the Indian norm, as we have already noted, it is essential to establish two propositions for the purpose of proving that consciousness is a quality of the body.

First, wherever there is body, there is consciousness. Body and consciousness are universally co-present. There can be no case of the presence of body along with the absence of consciousness.

Secondly, wherever there is the absence of body, there is also the absence of consciousness. Body and consciousness are universally co-absent. There can be no case of the presence of consciousness along with the absence of body.

Consequently, a full or complete refutation of the Lokayata view presupposes the logical rejection of both propositions. This can be done only by establishing two counterpropositions, namely—

First, body can exist along with the nonexistence of consciousness.

Secondly, consciousness can exist along with the nonexistence of body.

It is evidently hard to establish empirically at any rate the second of these counterpropositions—the talk of a

purely disembodied consciousness being more quaint than is normally allowed in philosophy. Thus though the Indian idealists freely talk of the mystic experience where the enlightened saint is supposed to be left with pure consciousness absolutely uninhibited by matter, it is significant that even Samkara, while refuting the Lokayata view in terms of standard logic, cannot categorically claim that consciousness does in fact exist without any relation to the body. As against the second proposition supporting the Lokayata view, namely that wherever there is the absence of body there is also the absence of consciousness, Samkara simply says that it is doubtful after all, "for it is possible that even after this body has died, the qualities of the Self should continue to exist only by passing over to another body".[57] The tone of hesitancy in the argument is obvious, and the interesting question is: why is it so? Could it be because of Samkara's reluctance to the full and free use for philosophical purposes the current superstitions concerning the transmigration of souls? From his firm commitment to irrationalism already discussed, we have to presume that the real cause of this hesitation is something else. Even admitting that the soul transmigrates from one body to another, it is difficult to claim that while in transit it continues to be characterised by the same consciousness as that of its previous state, inasmuch as according to the same superstition, a human being—depending on the nature of his past actions—can as well be reborn in the form of the lowest insect, evidently no longer characterised by his previous human consciousness. Such a consideration might have prevented Samkara from the categorical assertion that there is positive proof of the existence of consciousness along with the nonexistence of body, as is the consciousness of the soul during its transit from one body to another.

As for the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, there is really no scope to prove the presence of consciousness along with the ab-

57. Samkara on *Br.Su.* iii.3.54.

sence of body, because, though in their view there is a soul as distinct from the body, the first precondition for this soul's acquiring consciousness is its conjunction with body.

In any case, for the refutation of the Lokayata view, there is no special concentration on proving the second of the two counterpropositions just mentioned. In the Indian context, this point is materially important, for, according to the Indian norm of philosophical debate, when the relation between two things is based on the evidence of their universal co-presence (*anvaya*) supplemented by the evidence of their universal co-absence (*vyatireka*), it can be fully or adequately refuted only by proving *both* the co-presence and co-absence as false.

But let us leave this and turn to another question. How far do the opponents of the Lokayata succeed even in proving that the universal co-presence of body and consciousness is not a fact, that there can be the presence of the body along with the absence of consciousness? The evidence considered most solid for the purpose is that of the corpse. Samkara mentions this, and so do Jayanta Bhatta and Gunaratna.

As cryptically put by Jayanta Bhatta,[58] "The body is without consciousness, because it is a body, as is the case of the dead-body." Gunaratna repeats this:

It is argued by the Lokayatas that consciousness originates from the material elements transformed into the form of the body. The reason given for this is as follows. The material origin of consciousness is inferred from the fact that consciousness exists only in the presence of body...

But all this is untenable, because the general ground of the inference, viz that consciousness is present only in the presence of body, is itself illogical. It is negated by clear cases to the contrary. Thus, after death, the body remains, though it has no longer any consciousness.[59]

58. Jayanta Bhatta *NM* ii.12.

59. Gunaratna *TRD* 144.

But is this evidence so decisive as it is assumed? How much, in other words, is its worth against what is really claimed by the Lokayatas?

Its main basis is the assumption that the corpse is a body in the full sense of the term. But it is precisely the point against which the entire drift of the Lokayata argument is directed. *The body, they argue, is the result of some peculiar transformation of the material elements. Hence it exists in the full sense of the term only so long as the transformed state of the material elements remains intact. What, then, is meant by death from this point of view? It simply means the beginning of the process of disintegration of the peculiar transformation of the material elements resulting in the body. This disintegration—called decomposition or decay—eventually results in the return of the material elements to their original state of pre-transformation. And if so, the corpse is not the same as the body; it is the very opposite of the body—or, more strictly, the beginning of this opposite.*

Hence nothing is more natural from this point of view than the absence of consciousness in the corpse. The evidence of the lack of consciousness in the corpse really proves what the Lokayatas want to prove, namely that consciousness is the result of the peculiar transformation of matter, which is negated by what is called death.

The crux of the problem is thus a different one. It is concerning the possibility of the extraordinary form of transformation of matter resulting in living organism. This does not mean that the logical categories of universal co-presence and universal co-absence of body and consciousness, in terms of which the opponents of Lokayata want to assess it, are irrelevant. But they can have relevance only after the Lokayata positon is first rightly formulated.

Among the opponents of the Lokayata, there is none to

do this. What is at best attempted is only a parody or caricature of the Lokayata view. This is done by Samkara, Jayanta Bhatta and Gunaratna, when they claim that the corpse decisively disproves the Lokayata view. It is conveniently overlooked that the Lokayatas are not talking of the corpse at all. What they were talking of is the living organism. The corpse and the living organism—like everything else in nature—are made of matter no doubt. Nevertheless what is distinctive of the living organism is, in the Lokayata view, some peculiar transformation of matter. The details of this process of transformation are of course unknown to our ancient Lokayatas. But that does not mean that they are really unknowable. They are being progressively known by contemporary science:

Experimental work in pharmacology and neurophysiology has demonstrated the physiochemical basis of mental activities—perception, imagery, memory, inference, learning, mental illness, and the like. For example, a connection between the consolidation of memory and the manufacture of protein in the brain has been established, and it is known that the molecule retinal (C_{20} H_{28} 0) in the eye (of mollusk, arthropod, and vertebrate), when struck by quanta of light, changes shape and sets in motion the process of vison. Man's minding is an activity of a material body that evolved from the beginnings of the material earth $4\frac{1}{2}$ billion years ago into living matter $3\frac{1}{2}$ billion years ago, into a mammalian form nearly 200 million years ago, into a primate from 60 million years ago, into a walking ape 30 million years ago, and into a hominid one million years ago... Here we take 'minding' to be a material force arising in, conditioned by, and influencing environing forces. It is a human bodily activity (1) sensitive and responsive, (2) valuational and purposive, and (3) innovative and connective. Minding is not limited to brain, eyes, muscles, heart, viscera, or voice mechanism. Man's body acts as a unit, using all organs, his whole body is minded, for any impairment in an organ impairs his minding. Minding is the whole body's sensing and mediately responding to other bodies, communicating and cooperating with other human bodies, to secure individual and social values."

This is not what our Lokayatas said, but said by a con-

temporary philosopher—Professor Harward L. Parsons[60]—trying to sum up the findings of contemporary science on basically the same question that is discussed by our Lokayatas. What makes the quotation relevant to our present dscussion is that the detailed knowledge gained by contemporary science in connection with the problem of mind and consciousness presupposes the assertion of a theoretical position, which is brilliantly anticipated by our Lokayatas. This position, as Parsons puts it, is: "Minding is an activity of living matter, i.e. *of a special organisation of matter.*"[61] The Lokayatas are defending precisely this theoretical position, though with a very limited stock of knowledge of matter and of the 'special organisation of matter'. In the historical context to which they belong, such knowledge is not expected of them. Nevertheless what is so remarkable is that they do not allow this ignorance to develop into a fetish as it were and call it the soul temporarily residing in the body and imparting consciousness to it. What appears to them most important is the problem of the origin of living body out of nonliving matter or of a body endowed with consciousness from the material elements themselves unconscious. This they want to solve in terms of the stock of their own observations of the special organisation of matter—the example of fermentation and distillation, strikingly free from the animistic idea which the positive sciences have only recently outgrown.

It seems that among the opponents of the Lokayata, Gunaratna realises this. So he tries to refute the very concept of some special form of transformation of the material elements into a living organism endowed with consciousness. However, as all defence of superstition against science is perhaps destined to be, much of his argumentation in this connection is quite irrelevant and puerile, notwithstanding its apparent pedantry and scholasticism.

60. Parsons in RCCP (ed. McGrood, Riepe & Somerville) 92-93.
61. *Ib.* 96.

Instead of attempting a literal translation of his terse writing, we give below his main arguments in the form of free rendering.[62]

The main point of the Lokayata view, says Gunaratna, is that by body is meant nothing but a special form of transformation of the material elements, like earth etc., as the alcoholic drink is nothing but a special form of transformation of its ingredients. From this point of view, the special transformation of earth etc. does not persist after death, which means that the dead body is not the same as what is called the body. Thus the Lokayatas can easily claim that the evidence of the lack of consciousness in the corpse is hardly relevant for refuting their view.

As against this, Gunaratna offers mainly two arguments.

First, it is impossible for the Lokayatas to prove that the corpse basically differs from the living body on the ground that some of the ingredients necessary for the making of the living body—like the element of air or fire —are absent in the case of the corpse.

Second, from the point of view of the Lokayatas themselves, there is no reasonable explanation of the special form of transformation of the material elements supposed to account for the origin of consciousness in the body.

According to the Lokayatas, the ingredients of the living body are the four material elements. Therefore one way of proving basic difference between the living body and the corpse is to claim that some of these ingredients are absent in the corpse. Gunaratna suggests that, from the Lokayata point of view, such absent element is either fire or air—if not both. This suggestion is based on the observation that the living body differs from the corpse inasmuch as the former is characterised by respiration (air) as well as a certain body temperature (fire), which are obviously absent in the latter. Besides, there is a tendency in ancient Indian speculation[63] according to which

62. Gunaratna *TRD* 144-6. 63. Frauwallner i.41.

the vital principle itself is equated to breath or air. In accordance with these, Gunaratna suggests that the Lokayatas are likely to claim:

(1) the absence of consciousness in the corpse is ultimately to be accounted for by the absence of air (breath =*prana*) in it.

(2) It is to be accounted for by the absence of fire (warmth=temperature) in it.

Once the Lokayatas are driven to depend ultimately on such foolish propositions, it becomes quite easy for Gunaratna to refute them. Thus, as against the first proposition, he comes out with a series of elaborate arguments.

First, the absence of air in the corpse cannot be proved, for anything with holes in it is observed to contain air and it is an obvious fact that even the corpse has many holes or openings in it—like the ear, nose, mouth etc.

Secondly, even assuming that the absence of air in the corpse ultimately accounts for the absence of consciousness in it, the easiest way to revive its consciousness is to add to it some air—say by fanning it.

Thirdly, says Gunaratna, by the absence of air in the corpse, the Lokayatas can perhaps mean the absence of respiration or breath in the ancient sense of the vital principle (*prana*=life). Assuming this, it has to be claimed that the real cause of consciousness in the living body is this breath. But it is impossible to establish any causal connection between breath and consciousness. On the contrary, a dying man is frequently observed to be gasping or having profuse respiration, and yet the fact is that while having so much of the excess of breath, his consciousness is withering away. Again, by the yogic process one reaches a stage with perfect control over breath, existing without breathing at all. And yet, because of this suppression of breath, one's consciousness—far from being adversely affected—attains in fact the highest excellence. These prove that breath is not the cause of consciousness.

Thus disposing of the possible claim that the lack of consciousnes in the corpse is to be accounted for by the absence of air in it, Gunaratna summarily disposed of the other possible claim, namely that it is due to the absence of fire in it. If this is really so, says Gunaratna, the simplest way of reviving consciousness in the corpse is to set fire to it.

To these arguments, he adds another which is apparently strange for a believer in a soul separate from the body. If the corpse shows the lack of consciousness because of its lack of some of the ingredients of the body, how to account for the fact of the eventual origin of insects and flies from the decomposing corpse? What Gunaratna refers to is of course the false observation that once justified the belief in spontaneous generation—a belief shared among others by Aristotle, Descartes, Newton and William Harvey, and which is finally scrapped by the experiments of Pasteur, though it is relevant to remember here that "Pasteur freely acknowledged the possibility that living bacteria very well might be arising anew from inanimate matter."[64] We have of course no clue to know whether the Lokayatas do or do not believe in spontaneous generation. However, from the way in which Gunaratna uses this as an evidence against the Lokayatas it is evident that he believes in it, and so also perhaps his brother philosophers sharing the doctrine of an independent soul. But how can they possibly reconcile this belief to their doctrine of the soul? Assuming that the decomposing corpse is a mere mass of lifeless matter returning to its original state of disintegration, there is evidently no explanation—from their standpoint—of the origin of living insects, endowed with consciousness, from such a mass of lifeless matter.

But let us leave this point and take up the main arguments with which Gunaratna hopes to prove that there is no conceivable way for the Lokayatas to differentiate the corpse from living bodies. He first imputs to the Loka-

64. Beck 109.

yatas two possible assertions with which alone they are supposed to defend themselves. Then he triumphantly shows how hollow both are. It is impossible for the Lokayatas to claim that the absence of consciousness in the corpse is due to the absence of either air or fire in it.

But the question is: Are these arguments really relevant to refute the Lokayata position? The answer is quite simple. What these arguments refute is at best only a vulgar caricature of the Lokayata position. This point is important, for it shows that the opponents of materialism smack of intellectual dishonesty when it comes to the question of refuting the materialist view.

For all that we know of the Lokayatas, it is clear that they do not defend their view in the obviously puerile way in which Gunaratna wants them to defend it. They cannot claim that the living body endowed with consciousness is the result of a nondescript jumbling up of earth, water, fire and air, so that the absence of any of these elements in the corpse like air or fire can be compensated just by mechanically or loosely adding to it the missing element —say air by fanning the corpse or fire by burning it. If the Lokayata position is really so ridiculously puerile, the naive arguments with which Guharatna makes a show of refuting it can be adequate for his purpose. But the Lokayata view of consciousness is not that puerile; it is Gunaratna who makes it appear puerile so that it can be easy for him to dispose it of rather cheaply.

Notwithstanding what is uncertain about our knowledge of the Lokayatas, one point about them is beyond any dispute. They are not talking of some loose combination of matter resulting in the living organism with consciousness. What they are talking of instead is *some extraordinary form of the organisation of matter* as a result of which something peculiar that does not previously exist in the material elements, either in their isolation or in just a haphazard heap of these, does emerge, and this something is consciousness. The decisive proof of this is the illus-

tration of *mada-sakti* or intoxicating power invariably mentioned in connection with their theory—i.e. mentioned both by their sophisticated opponents as well as in the authentic popular verses attributed to them. Evidently, it is known to them as well as to their opponents that the ingredients of alcoholic drink simply jumbled up do not result in the emergence of intoxicating power. It is some extraordinary form of their transformation—the technique of which is known to the brewer and distiller—that the Lokayatas always speak of, and on the basis of which their own theory of the origin of consciousness is supposed to be understood.

The arguments of Gunaratna aganist the Lokayatas we have quoted so far completely ignore all this, and hence have the only value of a mere puerile rejection of an imaginary puerile position, which is certainly not the position of the Lokayatas. Being a sophisticated logician after all, Gunaratna himself perhaps realises this, for after such silly arguments he moves on to develop some apparently imposing scholastic considerations to prove that the very concept of the extraordinary form of transformation of the material elements cannot be compatible with the basic position of the Lokayatas.

The mere material elements, he argues, cannot be the cause of consciousness. Such a view is based on two assumptions: (1) the intrinsic nature of consciousness is that of being produced by the material elements, and (2) the intrinsic nature of the material elements is that they lead to the origination of consciousness. Assuming these two propositions, one is led to imagine the presence of consciousness in everything, i.e. as much in the human body as in the earthen jar, because *as cause* the material elements are identical.

What exactly is meant by this?

In the Lokayata view, only the material elements are real and everything in the world is caused by them. However, as causing the different things of the world, the

material elements *in the capacity of the material elements* are everywhere the same. Assuming that the jar is produced by the same material elements as those that produce the human body, there is no concievable explanation for the absence of consciousness in the jar and its presence in the human body, for it is further assumed that consciousness has the inherent nature of being the product of the material elements alone and the material elements have the inherent nature of producing consciousness.

Gunaratna says that, as against this argument, the only defence of the Lokayatas is that in their view any and every transformation of the material elements does not result in the origin of consciousness: only that extraordinary transformation of the material elements—which the Lokayatas call 'transformation into the form of the living body'—results in the origin of consciousness. This argues Gunaratna, is untenable, inasmuch as there is no reasonable explanation from the Lokayata point of view of such an extraordinary form of transformation of the material elements. The Lokayatas can possibly suggest three—and only three conceivable explanations for it:

(1) This extraordinary form of transformation is caused exclusively by the material elements, like earth etc.

(2) It is due to some additional factor, i.e. is caused by something over and above the mere material elements.

(3) It has no cause at all.

However, argues Gunaratna, none of these three possibilities is consistent with the Lokayata position.

The first is plainly absurd, because if the material elements are by themselves adequate for their extraordinary form of transformation into the living organism, such a transformation is to be expected wherever these elements are present. In the case of the earthen jar, for example, all the four material elements—earth, water, air and fire—are present. What is it then that prevents the jar from being a living organism endowed with consciousness?

As against this, the Lokayatas can argue that though

the material elements themselves are the real cause of the extraordinary form of transformation under discussion, there is no logical difficulty in admitting along with these a certain auxiliary cause (*sahakari-karana*)—say a specific proportion of these—for effecting this transformation. The admission of auxiliary cause is logically permissible. Thus though fire is the actual cause of smoke, smoke is not present in the red-hot iron ball in spite of the presence of fire in it. For producing smoke, fire needs also the auxiliary cause like the contact with wet fuel.

However, argues Gunaratna, it is impossible for the Lokayatas to defend themselves in this way. What, according to them, can account for this auxiliary cause? Is it supposed to be something over and above matter, or is it due to matter itself? Consistently with the Lokayata position, both these alternatives are impossible. The admission that this auxiliary cause is due to something more than mere matter amounts to the surrender of the position that matter alone is real. The other alternative is to claim that this auxiliary cause is due to the inherent nature of matter itself. Assuming this, how can it be explained that the alleged extraordinary form of transformation of matter into living organism is to be found *only* in certain specific cases?

Gunaratna thus hopes to disprove the first of the three possible explanations of the extraordinary form of transformation of matter into living organism. He next proceeds to show that the other two possible explanations of the same are really worse from the Lokayata standpoint.

Thus, the second of these explanations is that the extraordinary transformation of matter is due to some additional factor, i.e. due to something over and above matter itself. This is only a plain surrender of the basic thesis that matter alone is real. The third and last possible defence of the Lokayatas, argues Gunaratna, is to admit that the special transformation of matter is not due to any cause at all, that it is a purely accidental phenomenon. But

this is plainly absurd. In default of any specific cause of the transformation of matter into conscious organism, such a transformation can take place anywhere as much as nowhere. It can take place anywhere, for it presupposes no specific condition to be fulfilled and as such nowhere can be the want of any factor accounting for the absence of the transformation. It can, again, take place nowhere, because any specific condition necessitating such a transformation is to be found nowhere.

This is supposed to be the most decisive refutation of the Lokayata view by Gunaratna. He allows the materialists three possible ways of defending their own view of the extraordinary transformation of matter into living organism and shows that they are all incompatible with materialism itself.

Still the question is: How far are his elaborate arguments really relevant for the refutation of the Lokayata position? Of the three possible ways of selfdefence imputed by him to the Lokayatas, the last two are clearly irrelevant, for it is absurd to imagine that according to the materialists the special transformation of matter is due to something *more than matter* or that it is due to *nothing at all*. Therefore, in so far as he wants to demonstrate the futility of these two explanations, his polemic—as polemic against the Lokayatas—is redundant. That which is relevant is his effort to prove that there is no conceivable explanation of this extraordinary transformation of matter consistently with the assumption that matter alone is real.

What is the logical worth of this effort itself?

The assumption that matter alone is real, argues Gunaratna, cannot explain the extraordinary form of transformation of matter itself, because, in the materialist view, matter exists everywhere while the alleged transformation is to be found only in certain restricted cases. In accordance with the Indian way of putting the point, therefore, the Lokayatas can only argue that though matter is the cause of consciousness, for the actual production of this

consciousness only in certain specified cases, matter needs certain auxiliary cause as well. However, argues Gunaratna, how to account for this auxiliary cause? Is it something more than matter or is it inherent in matter itself? Both these possibilities go against the materialist assumption. If the auxiliary cause is viewed as something other than matter, the Lokayatas are obliged to surrender their own position that matter alone is real. In Indian terminology, this is known as *tattvantara,* i.e. the admission of some principle other than one's own. If, on the contrary, the auxiliary cause is conceived as inherent in matter itself, it has to be admitted that wherever there is matter there is this auxiliary cause of its extraordinary form of transformation, and hence the extraordinary form of transformation itself.

Is this argument adequate for the full and final refutation of the materialist view of the origin of consciousness? Or is it only indicative of the tendency to force the materialist view into some rigidly understood formal categories, and thus deny its real significance?

The actual point of this polemics is that since the materialists claim that matter is the only reality, they are logically debarred from admitting even the laws of motion of matter, for this means the admission of something more than mere matter. This can be the criticism of some imaginary position, but not of materialism. Materialism does not mean that since the laws of motion of matter are necessarily extraneous to the bare concept of matter-in-itself, admitting them means the modification or surrender of the fundamentals of materialism. It takes centuries of scientific research to arrive at the understanding of the nature of matter and the laws of its motion. Nevertheless materialism has always been the theoretical quest for the understanding of matter along with its laws of motion.

Since we are discussing here not materialism in general but materialism in the specific form in which it is represented by the Lokayatas, our first question is: Do the Lokayatas have anything to say about the laws of motion

of matter—i.e. the laws according to which matter is transformed into the infinite multiplicity of the things of nature? If so, our next question would be: Does this logically oblige them to admit anything inconsistent with their fundamental postulation that matter is the ultimate reality?

Beginning from the days of the Upanisads,[65] Indian literature—both philosophical and nonphilosophical—repeatedly refers to a view called *svabhava-vada*, literally meaning 'theory of inherent nature' and rendered by Hiriyanna simply as 'naturalism'.[66] However, perhaps its nearer modern equivalent is the 'theory of the laws of nature', howsoever rudimentary may be its understanding in ancient India. Thus essentially as the 'theory of the laws of nature', it is in basic confrontation with two other theories viz of the supernatural creator (*isvara-vada*) and pure accidentalism (*yadrccha-vada*)—the former explaining all natural phenomena in terms of a divine will and the latter viewing them as purely fortuitous. Along with accidentalism, the theory of the laws of nature rejects the view of supernatural causation. "Both the doctrines are at one in rejecting the idea that nature reveals a divine power working behind it or indeed any transcedental being which controls it or is implicated in it. Nor does either school seek for its views any supernatural sanction."[67] Nevertheless the fundamental difference between accidentalism and *svabhava-vada* must not to be overlooked: "While the one maintains that the world is a chaos and ascribes whatever order is seen in it to mere chance, the other recognises that 'things are as their nature makes them'. While the former denies causation altogether, the latter acknowledges its universality, but only traces all changes to the thing itself to which they belong... Hence according to *svabhava-vada*, it is not a law-less world in which we live: only there is no external principle governing it. It is selfdetermined, not undetermined."[68]

Some of the philosophers opposing the theory of

65. *Sv.Up*. i.2. 66. Hiriyanna 103. 67. *Ib*. 104. 68. *Ib*. 103-4.

svabhava want first to explain its main point. Samkara[69] says, "By *svabhava* is meant the efficacy inherent in each form of matter, as for instance the radiation of heat by fire." According to Samkarananda,[70] "*svabhava* means the inherent nature—i.e. the unique causal efficiency—of each form of matter. For example: burning in the case of fire, flowing downwards in the case of water." Amalananda Sarasvati[71] says, "*svabhava* is that which exists as long as the thing exists, for example respiration etc. in the case of living beings." Gunaratna himself wants to be a little more explicit:[72] "By *svabhava* is meant the transformation of objects because of their inherent nature. Everything that exists comes into being because of the operation of *svabhava*. Thus, e.g., earth is transformed into pot and not into cloth etc. . . . From the threads, again, is produced the cloth and not the pot, etc. Such regular occurrence cannot be accounted for without the operation of *svabhava*. . . Therefore everything is to be finally viewed as due to *svabhava*." There are some authentic popular verses defending the view. Thus:

Who makes the thorn sharp?
And the beasts and birds so varied?
All these come to being from *svabhava*.
There is none whose desire forms them; what is the use of will?

Again,

The thorns of the date-palm are sharp,
Some of them are straight, others twisted,
But its fruits are round.
Tell us: who has shaped all these?

Such verses are largely intended to be satires on the theory of divine will no doubt. However, rejecting divine will, what they are positively groping at is the concept of the laws of nature—laws that are supposed to express the inherent nature or the inherent causal efficiency of matter itself.

69. Samkara on *Sv.Up.* i.2.
70. *Dipika* i.2.
71. *Kalpataru* ii.1.33.
72. Gunaratna *TRD* 13.

But who are the persons that are thus trying to grasp the concept of the natural laws? The *Mahabharata* tells us that they are the same who consider that the *bhuta*-s are ultimately real: *svabhavam bhutacintakah.*[73] This is simply a way of saying that the plain-speaking materialists—known as the Lokayatas or Carvakas—are the representatives of the theory of natural laws. Following the tradition recorded in the *Mahabharata,* the comparatively later Indian literature repeatedly attributes the theory of *svabhava* to the Lokayatas.

Thus, commenting on the *Brhat-samhita,* Bhatta Utpala[74] says, "others, i.e. the Lokayatas claim that the cause of the world is *svabhava.* From *svabhava* arises the multiplicity of the things of the world and because of *svabhava* these are eventually destroyed." Agnicit Purusottama[75] observes, "According to the Carvakas, *svabhava* itself is the cause." Madhavacarya[76] sums up this tradition when he makes the Lokayatas argue:

But an opponent will object, if you thus do not admit the unseen or transempirical force (*adrsta*), the multiplicity of the world would be just fortuitous. To this, the Lokayatas answer: This is not rightly said, because the causation of the multiplicity of the things of the world is adequately explained by *svabhava.* As it is said,

Fire is hot, water is cold, air is neutral to touch.
By whom are all these varieties created?
Because of *svabhava* all these are so.

In accordance with evidences like these, it has become practically a part of the convention of the modern scholars to look at the theory of *svabhava* as the theory of the Lokayatas in particular. As Gopinath Kaviraj[77] has put it, "The earliest representatives of the extreme form of *svabhava-vada* seem to have been a set of free-thinkers in ancient India, who were originally called the Lokayatas but subsequently came to be more widely known under the name of the Carvakas. Rank materialism, an absence

73. *Mbh.* santi ccxxxii.19. 74. Quoted by Kaviraj in SBS ii.95n.
75. *Ib.* 76. Madhava *SDS* 4. 77. Kaviraj in SBS ii.95.

of belief in the unseen and of regard for authority, an uncompromising rationalism—more properly casuistry (*vitanda*)—were their original characteristics."

This is not the place to discuss how wrong it is to confuse Lokayata rationalism with casuistry (*vitanda*). Nor do we have the scope here to digress into the extremely interesting question concerning the possible affiliation of the Samkhya and Nyaya-Vaisesika to the same theory of *svabhava*.[78] What particularly interests us for our present discussion are mainly two points.

First the theory of *svabhava* basically means the theory of the laws of nature, or, more strictly, the early anticipation of these laws—the first groping at them on the part of the ancient philosophers.

Secondly, it is on the basis of this theory that the Lokayatas want to explain the origin of the infinite variety of things of nature from the *bhuta*-s, i.e. from matter conceived by them in terms of the four physical elements.

With these points in mind, we may return to the main question we have been discussing, namely the relevance of Gunaratna's main argument in refutation of the Lokayata view of consciousness.

In Lokayata view, consciousness is the result of an extraordinary form of transformation of matter. But what accounts for this transformation? From what we have just discussed the obvious answer from the Lokayata standpoint is that, like all transformations of matter, this extraordinary form of transformation too is caused by *svabhava* or natural laws. What is extraordinary about it is the emergence of something qualitatively new, viz the phenomenon of consciousness. But though extraordinary, it is not a mysterious phenomenon at all in the sense of falling outside the general pattern of the transformation of matter according to the laws of nature.

Such, then, is the position of the Lokayatas. If, there-

78. Chattopadhyaya IA 66ff & 297ff.

fore, the norm of Indian logic obliges them to talk in terms of 'auxiliary cause' or *sahakari-karana* of matter accounting for its extraordinary transformation, this auxiliary cause from their point of view is nothing but *svabhava* or law of nature.

However, argues Gunaratna, the very admission of an auxiliary cause is fatal for the materialist, for the materialist is obliged to talk of pure matter as the only cause of consciousness.

First, Gunaratna is forcing on the materialist a position according to which he is supposed to admit the exclusive reality of matter-in-itself—i.e. a peculiarly hidebound concept of bare matter or of matter in an absolutist sense —so that it is illogical for him to speak even of the laws of motion of matter, or the laws of nature. Apparently neither the modern materialists nor the ancient ones like our Lokayatas are prepared to submit to such an absurd understanding of the materialist position. What they uphold may not be the fiction of materialism which alone answers Gunaratna's understanding of the materialist position; but this is materialism as understood by the materialists themselves.

From Gunaratna's point of view, however, if the modern materialist speaks of matter *as well as* of the laws of motion of matter, he can no longer stick to his basic claim that nothing but matter is ultimately real. Similarly the Lokayatas cannot speak of the *bhuta*-s *as well as* of *svabhava*. This, in Indian terminology, means the admission of *tattvantara*—i.e. of some principle extraneous to the fundamentals of one's own philosophy.

This is supposed to be the final argument against the Lokayatas. And the question is: What exactly is its worth? *The charge of the admission of 'tattvantara' is relevant only when the principle thus admitted openly flouts the fundamentals of a philosophy*, as for example the admission of a purely disembodied soul would have been for the Lokayatas, or as the virtual admission of the validity of normal experience and reason is for the Indian idealists

like Dignaga and Dharmakirti. *But the charge of the admission of 'tattvantara' is totally irrelevant when the principle thus admitted is so much in conformity with the fundamentals of a philosophy that to miss it means a serious logical lacuna for it*, as is obviously the case of the admission of the laws of nature for the Lokayatas, or the damnation of normal experience and reason is for Nagarjuna and Samkara. Thus, in short, the admission of *svabhava* by the Lokayatas, far from being any weakness of their philosophy, is an evidence of its inner consistency, because without this the extraordinary transformation of matter into living organism remains a mystery in the Lokayata philosophy.

7. The Evidence of Memory

If the polemics against the Lokayatas so far discussed is based primarily on the abstract norm of logic, a different strategy is sought to be developed particularly by the later Naya-Vaisesikas for the rejection of the view of the origin of consciousness from matter (*bhuta-caitanya-vada*), which, in Indian philosophy, is only another name of the view that identifies the body with the self (*dehatmavada*). Its main point is to prove that the Lokayata view is wrong, because it is thoroughly incompatible with directly observed facts, or because it goes against the right understanding of definitely ascertained empirical data.

The most decisive of these facts, according to the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, are two, which are to be jointly understood. They are: (1) the fact of recollection and (2) the fact that the body is always changing. The maturest representatives of the Nyaya-Vaisesika like Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana argue that these two facts, taken together, can never be reconciled to the Lokayata view. The argument is quite simple. The fact of recollection proves that the subject who in the past had some experience is the same that in the present remembers it, it being obviously absurd to imagine that one agent or one self is recollecting the ex-

periences of another. But this shows that the agent or self which is recollecting its past experience can never be identified with the body, inasmuch as one basic fact about the body itself is that it is always changing from infancy to old age. Thus, in short, since the fact of recollection presupposes an abiding agent, it cannot be accounted for by the ever-changing body, and as such it is necessary to admit that there is some self or soul over and above the body itself.

Following is a free and explanatory rendering of the argument as put by Jayanta Bhatta:[79]

It may be asserted that the real substratum of the attributes like desire etc. is the body itself. As Brhaspati claimed: consciousness belongs to the material elements themselves. We have already seen that in this view the origin of consciousness is analogous to the origin of the intoxicating power.

Answer to this is that the body cannot be the substratum of the attributes like desire, etc., because according to infancy, youth and old age, the body is always different. One cannot remember an object as it was previously perceived by another; one cannot have the desire for an object which is remembered by another. The desire for a thing presupposes the recollection of the pleasantness of the previous experience of the same thing. Therefore it is necessary to assume some substratum for the series of events beginning with the first experience of an object and culminating in the desire for attaining it. In other words, this series of events is as follows: First, the experience of something as actually pleasant. Secondly, the recollection of this previous experience of the object as having been pleasant. Thirdly, the desire for attaining the object. The actual basis of this entire series of events must be something which is itself abiding. Therefore it cannot be the body, because from infancy to youth and old age, the body is always changing, i.e. is always a different one—like the successions in a stream. Just as a person called Yajnadatta cannot recollect the experience of another person called Devadatta, so also the body of a young man cannot recollect the experience of the body of an infant; the two are totally different. Therefore some abiding self other than the body has to be admitted for the explanation of all this.

79. Jayanta Bhatta *NM* ii.10-11.

As against this, the Lokayatas are likely to argue as follows. What actually differ in such cases are only the stages of the same body. But the body as such—whose stages all these are—remains the same. This is proved by recognition. If the body of Devadatta as a boy is totally replaced by another body, viz the body of Devadatta as a young man, we can never recognise the latter as: 'This is the same Devadatta that was once a boy.' Since, however, recognition is a definite fact, we have to admit that there is no total replacement of one body by another—the body of a boy by the body of a young man. Hence, in spite of the differences of its stages, the body itself abides and as such is itself sufficient to explain the series of experiences beginning with the perception of the object as pleasant and culminating in the desire for attaining it.

As against all this, the Lokayatas are likely to anticipate an objection and answer it. The objection is: the fact of recognition referred to is only an illusion due to the misleading suggestion of some similarity between the two. Thus some newly grown nail or hair may be wrongly imagined as the old nail or hair actually cut off, so also the new body of the young man may be wrongly imagined as the same body of the boy because of some similarity between the two. To this the Lokayatas have an obvious answer. If the facts of recognition are thus easily explained away simply as cases of misleading perceptions or illusions, one is logically left with the doctrine of momentariness of everything. However, when the Buddhists defend this doctrine of momentariness, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas want to refute it on the evidence of the fact of recognition itself. Thus the typical argument of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas against the doctrine of momentariness is: the stem of a tree, e.g., is not something momentary, because even after a lapse of time we recognise it to be the same stem. If the fact of recognition thus enables the Nyaya-Vaisesikas to defend the view that the stem of the tree is an abiding entity, what prevents them from admitting that the abiding nature of the same body is proved on the basis of the recognition of it?

As against these arguments, there are two decisive evidences in favour of the view that the body is ever-changing. Firstly, in the case of the recognition of the stem of a tree, we do not experience differences in appearance, shape, magnitude, surroundings etc., while in the case of recognising the old Devadatta as the same young Deva-

datta there coexists the experience of a multitude of such differences. The two cases of recognition are not to be equated. In the case of the recognition of a stem of a tree previously perceived, the stem is an abiding substance. But not so in the case of the recognition of the human body. Secondly, that the body is ever-changing is conclusively proved by the fact of the digestion of food going to the maintenance of the body. Without this, there is no explanation for what happens to the food when it is digested, there is no explanation for the fattening of the body because of the consumption of the milk-products, no explanation for the increased blood-supply in the body because of medicines containing gold etc. All these prove that the body is ever-changing. Is it not absurd to imagine that a body with lean limbs is identical with a body with stout or fat limbs?

Thus the fact is that the body is ever-changing, or that one body is replaced by another. Hence the body itself cannot be the self that recollects its past experience. For the explanation of the fact of recollection, it is necessary to admit a self other than the mere body.

The most interesting features of this trend of argument —particularly the claim that the very fact of the consumption of food by the body shows that it is ever-changing— must not be overlooked. However whether the evidence of memory (and desire) actually proves what Jayanta Bhatta wants to—viz the existence of a permanent soul as distinct from the ever-changing body—is a different question altogether. Before passing on to discuss this, let us see how Udayana—the greatest of the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas—argues the same point on basically the same evidence, viz the fact of memory. We quote below his main arguments as lucidly explained by Phanibhusana Tarkavagisa:[80]

In refutation of the view of the origin of consciousness from matter, Udayana says that assuming that the body itself is conscious, the recollection at a different time of something experienced in the past becomes impossible. It is a fact that even in the old age, one remembers some-

80. Tarkavagisa iii.272f.

thing experienced during boyhood. However, in the absence of the boyish body during the old age and hence also in the absence of the impressions of the past experience as residing in the body itself, the recollection of the things experienced in boyhood can never be possible. The reason for this is that a thing as experienced by one cannot be remembered by another. In other words, from the loss and gain in the body it is indisputably proved that the old body is destroyed, giving place to a new body that comes into being. Therefore, it is imperative for us to admit that the boyish body is different from the youthful body and the latter different from the aged body. Because of the differences in the qualities in body materials, all these bodies can never be considered as identical. Differences in quantity are certainly indicative of differences in the substances. Besides, because of the daily change in body being proved by the daily loss and gain of the body material, the recollection today even of something experienced yesterday becomes just impossible. Again, assuming consciousness in all the organs of the body, it becomes impossible to explain the recollection of something previously experienced by a limb like the hand after the loss of such a limb. With the destruction of the agent that experiences is also lost the impression of the experience itself; hence the recollection due to such impression too becomes impossible. Nor can it be claimed that recollection is possible, because the impression of the previous experience—instead of being destroyed—is transmitted into a freshly originated body and, on the basis of this, the freshly originated body recollects the experience of the previous body. The reason for this is that the alleged transmission of impression of past experience from one body to another is just impossible. Assuming such a transmission of the impression of past experience from one body to another, we have to admit the possibility of the impressions of the mother's experience to that of the child in her womb. In that case, the child in the womb should be capable of remembering what was experienced by its mother. Nor can the absence of such a recollection be accounted for by the fact that only the impressions of the material cause are transmitted to its effect, on the ground that the mother is not the material cause of the child. Because, it has got to be admitted that with the loss of some limbs of a body, its remaining limbs go to the making of a new body altogether; in such a case the lost limb can by no means be considered as the material cause of the new

body; thus the impressions of the past experience by the lost limb cannot be transmitted to the new body, making it impossible for the new body to recollect the experience of the lost limb. For example when, in the past, the hand had some tactual experience, the impression of this experience should have remained confined to the hand itself. Yet, even the followers of the theory of the origin of consciousness from matter are obliged to admit that, after the loss of the hand, the past tactual experience of the hand is in fact recollected. From their point of view, however, the actual agent of the previous experience—viz the hand —along with the impression of the experience supposed to be confined to this agent itself, are now lost; how, then, can in such a case be at all possible the recollection of the past experience of this lost limb?

Thus, in brief, since the body is always changing, there is no explanation of the fact of recollection in terms of the mere body. It is necessary to postulate some abiding self other than the body—i.e. a soul over and above the body—which alone is capable of recollecting the past experiences.

This strategy followed by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas for the refutation of the Lokayata view has its distinct peculiarity. It is necessary for us to be clear about it, because only in accordance with it can we formulate the relevant criterion for assessing the adequacy or otherwise of the strategy itself.

What is the distinct peculiarity of this strategy? Instead of attempting to refute the Lokayata position on the basis of conceptual analysis or the mere formalities of pure reason, this strategy is intended to show that the right understanding of certain definitely ascertained empirical data flatly go against the theoretical position identifying the body with the self. But what does this mean? It means nothing but what is called today science and scientific knowledge.

Therefore the peculiar strategy of Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana just quoted consists in the assessment of the Lokayata position in terms of science and scientific data of their times. It is important to note this point because

of two reasons. First, it contains the clue to the real strength as well as the real weakness of the discussion under consideration. Secondly, it determines the actual standard by which the adequacy or otherwise of the argument is to be determined, for science can be judged by the standard of science alone.

Let us first note the actual strength of the analysis of Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana. For an assessment of the view identifying the body with the self, it is necessary first of all to have a right understanding of the body itself. Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana are unquestionably right when they insist on this. And the most striking feature of their understanding of the body is the fact that it is perpetually changing. This is based not merely on the obvious fact of the infant body eventually being transformed into the aged body. In the context of their times, what is more remarkable about their view is the ceaseless change of the body caused by the replacement of the body material itself—a fact which Jayanta Bhatta, for example, wants to prove by the very circumstance of the digestive process necessary for the maintenance of the body: the body is in constant need of nutrition and nutrition means the building up of new body material replacing the previously existing stock. This is remarkable because with the greater progress of the right interpretation of expirical data resulting in the discovery of the cell and the progressive insight into it, contemporary science is providing us with an enriched understanding of basically the same fact. Thus we are told today of cell reproduction going on within the body, resulting in the perpetual process of changing the body material, and therefore the body itself. "The speed with which cell reproduction occurs varies from place to place in the body according to local need. It is estimated that half of all the body's protein—mainly muscle tissue—is replaced every eighty days... New skin is steadily forming from underneath and pushing to the surface, where it dies and is washed away."[81]

81. Ratcliff & Platt in BHB 32.

If on the basis of their own scientific observations, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas brilliantly anticipate the view that the body is ceaselessly changing because of the perpetual process of the replacement of the body material, it is simply indicative of their lack of better scientific knowledge to fail to see how such a physiological view can be reconciled with the psychological fact called memory or recollection. However it would not have been fatal for the otherwise admirable science-orientation of the Nyaya-Vaisesika had its representatives simply confessed their ignorance of the possibility of such a reconciliation—an ignorance that is inevitable in the period of the history of science to which they belong. What proves really fatal for their science is the way in which they want to fill this gap in their knowledge—this ignorance—with the superstitious belief in an extracorporeal soul temporarily inhabiting the body, which alone is imagined to take charge of recollection or remembrance. This weakness of the Nyaya-Vaisesika is traceable as far back as the times of Gotama and Vatsyayana, who want to make up their lack of knowledge of the physical basis of the mental life with the concept of a distinct soul. Peculiarly enough, this soul is incapable of discharging psychical functions on its own. Even Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana who argue that without the admission of a soul over and above the body the fact of recollection remains unaccounted for in terms of the ever-changing body alone, cannot invest the soul with genuine psychical functions; this soul remains as much as an inert and unconscious entity as it is originally conceived in the Nyaya-Vaisesika. Therefore how can such a soul recollect its past experiences ultimately remains a mystery, i.e. even assuming that its existence is proved by the fact of recollection.

But the more important question is: Are the evidences offered by Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana really adequate to prove the existence of an extracorporeal soul? We have already seen that the criterion for the assessment of these evidences cannot be mere conceptual analysis or the for-

malities of logic alone. The evidence on which these philosophers rely is basically nothing but science and scientific knowledge of their times and science can be judged only by the standard of science.

Therefore the relevant question for an assessment of this polemic against the Lokayatas is a simple one. Does the assumption of an extracorporeal soul prove more useful for the progress in the understanding of memory or recollection, or has this progress been really due to a deeper understanding of the nature and function of the body itself? Does the assumption of Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana prove more fruitful for the scientific understanding of memory than the assumption of the Lokayatas? There is only one answer to this question. The advance in our knowledge of the phenomenon called memory has been possible on the basis of a more thorough understanding of the body itself, while the hangover of the ancient belief in the extracorporeal soul temporarily inhabiting the body has been more a hindrance than help for this progress in the knowledge of the psychical phenomena in general, inclusive of memory.

Not that memory is fully explained in contemporary physiology. Still the progress of our knowledge is already imposing. We may note here a few aspects of this progress, all of which are based on a better insight into the body.

First, admitting the body to be ever-changing, how do contemporary scientists understand the physical basis of memory? This is how H. Hyden[82] answers the question:

I would like to stress a unique feature of the nerve cells in the body. Somatic cells in general divide, some rapidly over short intervals, others over longer intervals, but they all divide. The unique feature of the nerve cells is that they do not divide. We are born and we die with the same nerve cells. What is the reason for this property in which respect the nerve cells differ from other cells? One main reason, I think, is the necessity of keeping the accumulating experiences of the memory store of each neuron ready

82. Hyden 1ff.

for immediate use during the whole of the life cycle. This specialised task of the nerve cells is linked, no doubt, with the intricate form that neurons have acquired—characterised by long branching processes—during their evolution. So I would like to make some comments, later on, about a possible memory mechanism and its substrate in the neuron.

Of the highly specialised properties of the brain cells, we are told, a very important one is 'their capacity to produce nucleic acids and proteins on a large scale'. Protein synthesis takes place at the RNA-rich sites of the cell body. "The nerve cells contain around 1500 micromicrograms of RNA per cell" and "the big neurons are the RNA...containing cells par excellence in the body". "The RNA proteins produced within the neuron could serve as a substrate for a learning and recalling mechanism—in other words, memory. The capacity to recall the past to consciousness can certainly be expected to reside in a primary mechanism of general biological validity." To these may be added the data contained in the article on "Memory and Protein Synthesis" (*Scientific American*, June 1967) by Bernard W. Angranoff, showing the connection between the consolidation of memory and the manufacture of protein in the brain.

Thus the phenomenon called memory is not so mysterious as to overwhelm the philosopher to the extent of submitting to the ancient superstition of an extracorporeal soul. On the contrary, so far as this mystery is penetrated by contemporary science, it is penetrated on the basis of the fundamental theoretical assumption of the ancient Lokayatas, the theory that all psychical phenomena—everything that is broadly understood as consciousness—are the products of matter extraordinarily organised into the form of the living organism.

That the mystery of memory can be progressively solved not on the assumption of an extracorporeal soul but on the basis of a more thorough knowledge of the body itself is further indicated by the extremely interesting experi-

ments of W. G. Penfield. Here is how Y. Saparina[83] gives a popular account of the experiments:

(Certain) areas in the frontal and temporal lobes did not respond to stimuli of any kind. Application of live electrodes caused no sensations of flashing lights, rumbling sounds or creeping skin in test subjects, as was the case when visual, acoustic or tactile centres were stimulated. Then one day the Canadian researcher W. G. Penfield applied electrodes carrying a very weak current to a man's temples. The effect was as though sound and visual recordings of old memories were being played back in his head. Scenes, sounds, thoughts and emotions of many years ago came to life in vivid detail. The visions disappeared as soon as the electrodes were removed or the current switched off. Professor Penfield describes many interesting experiments. When an electrode was applied to the temple of one subject he said that he heard a piano playing. When the stimulous was repeated he heard a voice singing and even knew the tune. The stimulus was applied again, and the subject remarked that it was a song from an opera he had once heard. When the electrode was removed four centimetres closer to the forehead the subject recalled the advertisements he had once seen of a bottle company and a bakery. To make sure that this was not a case of self-suggestion Penfield told the man that he was switching on the current, but actually did not. When asked what he now saw the subject said, 'nothing'. These observations confirm that recollections appear spontaneously and are due to stimulation of the temporal lobes of the brain. In some cases stimulation caused such vivid hallucinations that people were convinced that they were actually taking place. One woman, for example, repeatedly heard the same song when an electrode was applied to the same point on the temporal lobe. It stopped when the current was switched off and picked up from where it had left off when the current resumed. At Professor Penfield's request she hummed the tune as if she were following an invisible orchestra. In fact, she was convinced that she had been following a phonograph playing in the laboratory, and nothing could dissuade her. The hallucinations always referred to some past experience, often apparently quite forgotten. One patient was so surprised that he exclaimed, 'Doctor, I hear my friends laughing!' When asked what he found so remarkable, he said that it was the feel-

83. Saparina 118-20.

ing of himself joining in the laughter with his cousins living in South Africa, although he knew that he was in Canada at the moment. Different levels of the temporal lobe appear to be responsible for different types of recollections. The upper storeys are responsible for remote events. Even their complete removal does not affect the memorisation of recent events. Damage of the lower portions, however, results in loss of memory of recent events, although old memories remain and can be evoked by the application of an electrode. Does this mean that the temporal lobes are the brain's archive, its memory centres? No, Professor Penfield says. This would be an over simplification. Events are actually not 'recorded' here, but in other sections of the brain which are closely associated with the temporal lobe. An electric stimulus excites a section of the temporal lobe which transmits the stimulus to the place where memories of the past are stored. The temporal lobes switch on a tape recorder inside our head, as it were. They do not store recollections themselves, they merely dig them out of our memory archives.

Not that these memory archives are already definitely located in the brain, nor is there real ground to think that the problem of memory is fully solved in contemporary science. Theoretically speaking, however, these are not the main points relevant for our present discussion. What is relevent is the simple fact that the progress already achieved in recent years about the real understanding of memory is quite spectacular. And the question is: What is the theoretical assumption on the basis of which this progress has been possible? Is it the assumption of an extracorporeal soul carrying a mysterious baggage of its own past experience and having the mysterious faculty of peeping back into its contents? Or is it the assumption that a deep and still deeper understanding of the body itself helps this progress in the understanding of memory—like the understanding of the other psychical phenomena—and hence it holds the further prospect of knowing these better? In Indian philosophy, the theoretical controversy that we have been discussing is precisely the controversy between these two positions. While the Lokayatas claim that the clue to everything psychical is to be sought in the

body, the Nyaya Vaisesikas—failing to understand the possibility of this in terms of their own knowledge of the body—imagine that there can be no explanation of the psychical phenomenon called memory without the admission of an abiding extracorporeal substance, the soul. However the later progress in our understanding of memory makes this soul a redundant hypothesis. We are shown the path for the right understanding of memory in terms of the body and this consistently with the right understanding of the sense in which the body is really ever-changing.

To sum up: since the strategy followed by Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana for the rejection of the Lokayata view is to pose science and scientific knowledge against it, its adequacy or otherwise can be judged only in terms of science. Thus judged, we are led to see more sense and sanity in the Lokayata position than in the position of Jayanta Bhatta and Udayana intended to replace it.

We may now return to our original question. How far is the Lokayata view of the origin of consciousness from matter refuted in Indian philosophy? In the usual accounts of Indian philosophy, nothing is perhaps more facile than the assumption that the Lokayata view is too naive to stand on its own feet and hence its refutation is the easiest for its advanced opponents. However, as we have seen, the arguments with which the Lokayata view is sought to be refuted are really based either on the technique of forcing a peurile position on the Lokayatas or on the technique of parading immature science against a theoretical position only on the basis of which science moves towards maturity.

8. An Ancient View on Matter & Consciousness

A review of the problem of matter and consciousness as discussed in Indian philosophy remains incomplete without a brief note on how one of our ancient philosophers—one of the earliest about whom we have some definite knowledge

—expresses himself on it. He is Uddalaka Aruni and his views are recorded in the *Chandogya Upanisad.*[84] However, because of the persistent misinterpretation and misrepresentation of his real view which are sought to be corrected only recently by H. Jacobi and W. Ruben, we propose to begin with an analysis of a highly interesting evidence of a possible defence of the materialist theory of the origin of consciousness, which is to be found in the writings of Jayanta Bhatta, but which contains an important clue to the right understanding of the position of Uddalaka.

Consistent with the Indian practice of first representing the opponent's position (*purvapaksa*) before starting to refute it, Jayanta Bhatta, mentions a number of arguments on the basis of which the Lokayatas can claim that consciousness is only a product of matter. One of them is:[85]

> Between body and consciousness are to be observed universal co-presence (*anvaya*) as well as universal co-absence (*vyatireka*). Thus, it is commonly observed that a body well-nourished with food and drink has improved consciousness (*patti cetana*). The opposite is observed in the reverse case. (That is, in the absence of nourishment for the body, there is a marked deterioration of consciousness.) The body of the young boy who takes *Brahmi-ghrta* shows remarkable improvement of consciousness... Thus the improvement and deterioration of consciousness are directly explicable by the presence and absence of the excess of the material elements.

The argument is cryptically put and let us first see its implications. As already discussed, for the purpose of conclusively proving causal connection between two phenomena, it is necessary to point to the universal co-presence as well as universal co-absence between the two. Accordingly, says Jayanta, the Lokayatas want to prove the material origin of consciousness on the basis of the following: (1) The universal co-presence of matter and consciousness: Whenever the body is well-nourished, it shows improved consciousness. (2) The universal co-absence of

84. *Ch. Up.* vi.

85. Jayanta Bhatta *NM* ii.13.

matter and consciousness: Whenever the body is undernourished, it shows deterioration of consciousness. Besides, the traditional "brain tonic" of Indian medicine called *Brahmi-ghrta* goes to the improvement of consciousness. This is a further confirmation of the universal co-presence of matter and consciousness.

Thus is proved that matter—in the form of food, brain tonic, etc.—added to the body is the cause of consciousness. In Mill's logic, such an argument would have been expressed as a case of the method of concomitant variation: more matter showing better consciousness, less matter showing worse consciousness. But the Indian logicians prefer to express such arguments in terms of universal co-presence and universal co-absence. In any case, whatever may be the form chosen for expressing the argument, its main point is a simple one. Matter absorbed in the body in the form of food etc. goes to the making of consciousness.

Let us not try to judge here the intrinsic merit of the argument itself. Historically speaking, it raises another interesting question. Wherefrom can Jayanta Bhatta take this argument which he attributes to the Lokayatas? To think that he gets it from some Lokayata text now lost to us would be purely conjectural. It would be equally conjectural to imagine that he simply fabricates it, because basically the same argument is to be found in the *Chandogya Upanisad*, with which Jayanta is surely acquainted. In the whole range of Indian philosophical literature there is only one text that mentions this argument—or, more properly, its definite prototype—and therefore it is to be presumed that Jayanta Bhatta takes it from there.

In the *Chandogya Upanisad*, this line of argument is explained by Uddalaka Aruni, who, moreover, insists on an experimental demonstration of it. As a remarkable piece of scientific literature belonging roughly to the seventh century B.C., the sixth chapter of the *Chandogya Upanisad* containing the exposition of Uddalaka's view needs to be discussed in full, though we have the scope here to quote

only that part which has a direct bearing on the problem of matter and consciousness.

Uddalaka Aruni has a son called Svetaketu. In accordance with the custom of the age, the son, when only a boy of twelve, is sent to study the Veda—i.e. the early Samhitas—which, already during the Upanisadic age, acquire scriptural status. Svetaketu "then, having become a pupil at the age of twelve, having studied all the Vedas, returned at the age of twentyfour, conceited, thinking himself learned, proud". But the father does not apparently care so much for this scriptural knowledge. Being himself a philosopher, he is interested in the fundamental stuff underlying the infinite variety of things of the world. So he asks the son whether he has been taught anything about it. The son, having no idea of it asks, "How, pray Sir, is that teaching?"

Uddalaka says, "Just as, my dear, by one piece of clay everything made of clay is known—the modification is only a verbal distinction, a name; the reality is just clay. Just as, my dear, by one copper ornament everything made of copper is known—the modification is only a verbal distinction, a name; the reality is just copper. Just as, my dear. by one nail scissors everything made of iron is known—the modification is only a verbal distinction, a name; the reality is just iron. So, my dear, is that teaching."

Thus the philosopher feels that it is important above all to find out the first principle for the explanation of nature, assuming as a matter of course that behind the bewildering variety and multiplicity of things of nature, there is sure to be a discoverable or knowable first principle or primitive ground or fundamental stuff. Significantly this assumption itself is under the lead of essentially empirical data: clay underlying the multiplicity of all earthen things, iron underlying the multiplicity of all iron implements, and so on. In the general drift of his thought, there is nothing that can be called religion-orientation and mysticism.

As contrasted with the Upanisadic idealists, Uddalaka Aruni—convinced of the validity of normal experience and reason for philosophical purposes—follows a different path altogether in his search of the first principle. In this search, he feels obliged to reject first a theory which, as is evident from many other passages of the Upanisads,[86] is already in circulation in his time. According to this, everything comes into being from non-being—from nothingness, the void. As Uddalaka argues,

> In the beginning, my dear, this world was just being (*sat*)—one only without a second. To be sure, some people say: 'In the beginning this world was just non-being (*a-sat*)—one only, without a second. From that non-being was produced being.' But, verily, my dear, whence this could be? How from non-being could being be produced? On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this world was just being—one only, without a second.

The main point of the argument and its general drift cannot but be reminiscent of the Samkhya philosophy, the starting point of which is that, since being cannot be produced from non-being, the essential nature of the cause is to be inferred from the essential nature of the effect. As a matter of fact, it is because of this argument that the Samkhya is led to the view of a material first cause of the world, for the world being material its cause too has to be essentially so. Therefore judging from the close similarity between Uddalaka's opening argument with that of the Samkhya philosophy, one is led to presume that the first cause which Uddalaka speaks of—his *sat* or original being—is something like the *pradhana* or *prakrti* of the Samkhya philosophy. This presumption is negatively corroborated by the later Vedantists. They can easily see the materialist proclivity of Uddalaka's line of argument, and, since they want to show that the entire Upanisadic literature sanctions only their own idealistic or theistic outlook, they argue that by *sat* or original being Uddalaka can never mean an unconscious material prin-

86. *Ch. Up.* iii.19.1; *Tait Up.* ii.7; etc.

ciple like the *prakrti* or *pradhana*. We shall presently see how flimsy are the textual materials they have to use for the purpose and, what is worse, how important are some of the internal evidences of the Upanisad they are obliged to overlook for forcing Uddalaka's philosophy into the idealist mould of thought represented in the Upanisads by Yajnavalkya and others. However let us first sum up the main points of Uddalaka's thoughts.

This *sat* or 'being only' is not anything like the 'pure being' of Parmenides—something immutable excluding not only all origination and decease but also all divisibility, diversity and movement. On the contrary, Uddalaka's *sat* is inherently dynamic; it contains within itself the principle of change and movement. Hence it is ultimately from this being—and because of the very nature of this being—that everything in the universe actually evolves, though, as intermediate stages of this evolution, Uddalaka conceives of three principles, namely fire (*tejas*), water (*ap*) and food (*anna*). After successively evolving from the original being, fire, water and food eventually produce everything in the universe—i.e. everything inanimate as well as animate, everything physical as well psychical.

Thus, because of the inherent dynamism of the original being, first evolves from it fire. From fire evolves water, as is evidenced by the fact that "whenever a person grieves or perspires from the heat, water (i.e. in the form of tears and perspiration) is produced". From water evolves food, as is evidenced by the fact that "whenever it rains, then there is abundant food. So food for eating is produced just from water."

The significance of all this may be missed if we forget that we are discussing here one of the first philosophers of ancient India, as is Thales of ancient Greece. What makes Thales the pioneer of European philosophy and science is not the conclusion he arrives at but the mode of his arriving at it. His conclusion that water is the first cause of the world is obviously puerile by the standard

of modern knowledge. Still his position is remarkable because he is the first in Europe to try to arrive at a first principle based on a rational understanding of empirical data, outgrowing for the purpose the spell of the religious and mythological fancies of the earlier times. So is the position of Uddalaka Aruni in Indian history, who, chronologically speaking, is perhaps earlier than Thales. He does observe that under the influence of fire is produced water, i.e. in the form of tears and perspiration. He does observe that food or vegetation is produced only when there is abundant water. Hence he thinks that from fire evolves water and from water evolves food.

Thus arriving at the principles of fire, water and food, Uddalaka moves on to show that everything in the universe—both inanimate and animate—eventually evolves from them. From the point of view of our present discussion of the problem of matter and consciousness, the most remarkable part of his discourse is the argument that mind—by which he evidently means consciousness or psychical faculty in general—is the product of food, i.e. basically the same argument which, as we have just seen, is attributed by Jayanta Bhatta to the Lokayatas. In Uddalaka's discourse, this forms part of his general theory of the development of the psycho-physical organisation from fire, water and food:

Uddalaka Aruni said to his son Svetaketu, 'Food, when eaten, undergoes a threefold division. Its coarsest constituent is transformed into faeces, its medium constituent into flesh and its subtlest constituent into mind. Water, when drunk, undergoes a threefold division. Its coarsest constituent is transformed into urine, its medium constituent into blood, its subtlest constituent into breath (*prana* =life). Heat (i.e. in the form of oil, butter, etc.), when consumed, undergoes a threefold division. Its coarsest constituent is transformed into bone, its medium constituent into marrow, its subtlest constituent into speech. Thus, my dear, mind consists of food, breath (life) consists of water, speech consists of heat.'

The son Svetaketu wanted to understand these more thoroughly; so the father continued:

Of curd, my dear, when churned, that which is subtle moves upward. It becomes butter. In the same way, my dear, of the food that is eaten, that which is subtle moves upward. It becomes the mind. Of water, my dear, that which is subtle moves upward. It becomes the breath (life). Of heat (oil, butter, etc.) when consumed, that which is subtle moves upward. It becomes speech. Thus, my dear, the mind consists of food, breath (life) consists of water, speech consists of fire.'

The son wanted to understand even more, and so Uddalaka continued:

'A person, my dear, consists of sixteen parts. For fifteen days, do not eat any food, but drink water as you please. Breath (life), which consists of water, will not be cut off from one who drinks water.'

For fifteen days Svetaketu did not eat any food. After that he approached the father and said, 'Sir, what shall I say?' Uddalaka wanted him to recite the hymns of the *Rgveda*, spells of the *Yajurveda* and melodies of the *Samaveda*. These did not occur to Svetaketu. To him Uddalaka then said,

'Just as, my dear, of a great mass of fire only a single piece of coal of the size of a fire-fly may be left, with which the fire would not thereafter burn much longer—similarly, my dear, only one part of your sixteen parts is left, and with it you fail to apprehend the Vedas. Eat; then you will understand.'

Then Svetaketu ate and approached the father. Then whatever Uddalaka asked, he answered. Then to him, Uddalaka said,

'Just as, my dear, of a great mass of fire only a single piece of burning coal of the size of a fire-fly is left, and, covered with straw, it is made to blaze up, and this fire would burn much thereafter—so, my dear, of your sixteen parts only the sixteenth part was left over; being covered with food that is made to blaze up. With this, you can now understand the Vedas. For, my dear, the mind consists of food, breath (life) consists of water, the speech consists of heat.'

It has to be noted that Uddalaka is not at all talking of mind in the later technical sense of internal sense-organ. He is talking of consciousness in its mundane sense in which the Lokayatas and Nyaya-Vaisesikas discuss the

problem of its origin. Mind, in this sense, is thus viewed by him as having a distinct material origin. It is nothing but the subtlest part of food consumed so that—as he experimentally demonstrates—in the absence of food in the body there is marked deterioration of consciousness, while in the presence of food in the body there is marked improvement of consciousness. Apart from the mind that he speaks of, Uddalaka knows nothing called consciousness.

This aspect of his discourse is so overtly materialist that even the later Vedantic idealists prefer on the whole to keep it under a blanket of silence. At the same time, since the entire Upanisadic literature has for them an absolute scriptural status, they have to do their best to prove that Uddalaka's teachings are in full conformity with their own idealism. For this purpose, they try mainly to show that the *sat* or original being spoken of by Uddalaka means some spiritual principle, and not any material first cause like the *pradhana* of Samkhyas.

Their great anxiety to prove that this *sat* is not anything material shows that they sense the strong possibility of a materialist understanding of it. It is perhaps not difficult to see why they do so. Uddalaka's opening argument, viz that from 'non-being' can never be produced 'being', logically implies that the effect potentially preexists in the cause and hence the nature of the cause is to be inferred from the nature of the effect—a theoretical position worked out in the Samkhya philosophy as *sat-karya-vada* or the theory of the potential preexistence of the effect in the cause. Starting from basically the same theoretical position, when Uddalaka argues that from the original *sat* successively evolve three material elements, viz fire, water and food, the obvious presumption is that this *sat* itself contains the potentials of matter and in this sense is itself something material. Otherwise, from his standpoint, there is the absurdity of 'matter' being produced from 'non-matter' or 'the absence of matter'—a form of 'being' produced from 'non-being'. This, in short, is presumably the reason why the Vedantic idealists apprehend the possi-

bility of understanding Uddalaka's *sat* as something like the *pradhana* of the Samkhya philosophy—an understanding which at any cost has to be rejected by them because of their own view of the scriptural nature of the Upanisads.

Already in the *Brahma-sutra* a number of reasons are given to prove a spiritual interpretation of Uddalaka's *sat*. In their commentaries, famous Vedantists like Samkara and Ramanuja elaborately explain these reasons, the more prominent of which may be briefly examined here.

The first of these reasons is philological, i.e. based on the right interpretation of the words used by Uddalaka. His exact words describing the evolution of fire from *sat* are. "It (*sat*) bethought itself: 'Would that I were many! Let me procreate myself.' It emitted heat." The very expressions used by Uddalaka show that by *sat* or original being he cannot mean an unconscious first principle or the *pradhana*. As Ramanuja explains,[87]

> That which does not rest on scripture, i.e. the *pradhana*, which rests on inference only, is not what is intimated by the text referring to the origination of the world; for the text exhibits the root—*iks*—which means, 'to think'—as denoting a special activity on the part of what is termed 'being'. 'It thought, may I be many, may I grow forth.' 'Thinking' cannot belong to the non-sentient *pradhana*: the term 'being' (*sat*) can therefore denote only the all-knowing highest Person who is capable of thought.

Samkara also argues basically on the same lines, though much more elaborately. However this evidence of the exact words used by Uddalaka does not really prove much, because in the very next sentences describing the evolution of water from fire and of food from water, he uses identical words:

"That heat bethought itself: 'Would that I were many. Let me procreate myself.' It emitted water... The water bethought itself: 'Would that I were many. Let me procreate myself.' It emitted food."

87. Ramanuja on *Br.Su.* i.1.5.

Thus, if the use of the root *iks*—to think—with reference to *sat* or original being really means that it is something spiritual, the same evidence results in the view that even the crassly material elements like fire and water are conceived by Uddalaka as spiritual. This is plainly absurd. What can be the possible significance of the use of such expressions? Can it be that they are only figurative expressions used by the ancient philosopher to exclude the possibility of any outside agency—any external will—for the explanation of the evolution of fire from the original being, as of water from fire and food from water? Or is it because, as Ruben suggests, Uddalaka—like Thales—is actually a hylozoist, i.e. a primitive materialist viewing matter itself as living? In view of the specific explanation attempted by Uddalaka of the evolution of life (breath) from water, perhaps the presumption is in favour of the first alternative. In any case the evidence of the use of his expressions cannot prove that the original being or *sat* is conceived by him as a spiritual principle, unless the later Vedantists agree to admit that the Upanisadic sage takes the same view of fire and water.

Secondly, Ramanuja argues, by *sat* Uddalaka cannot mean *pradhana,* because the doctrine of *pradhana* is based simply on inference and not on the scriptures. Such an argument, however, is based only on a gross distortion of the teaching of Uddalaka as recorded in the Upanisad. We have already seen the context of his discourse. When Svetaketu returns home after studying the scriptures for twelve years and is full of arrogance for his scriptural knowledge, Uddalaka asks him the question concerning the first cause, which he cannot do if he considers scriptural knowledge enough for philosophical purposes. Besides, the very pattern of his quest for the first cause shows that he is primarily interested in *inferring* it—in the way in which clay is inferred as underlying all earthen things or iron underlying all iron instruments.

But, argue both Samkara and Ramanuja, there is a decisive proof for the *sat* of Uddalaka being something else

than a mere material principle. At the end of each stage of the discourse, referring to the *sat* Uddalaka says: "That which is the finest essence—this whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality. That is *atman*. That art thou, Svetaketu." If *sat* means something material, how can it be thus equated to the soul? The very equating of this *sat* with the soul proves that Uddalaka is talking of some spiritual principle. Besides, argue both Samkara and Ramanuja, if *sat* means something material, the talk of it to Svetaketu can only mean utter confusion for him, because Svetaketu is after all desirous of final release or *moksa*, which can result only from the knowledge of an intelligent soul and never from the knowledge of any material first cause.

As the Vedantists consider these the most decisive arguments in favour of a spiritualist understanding of Uddalaka's *sat*, it is necessary to quote certain internal evidences of the Upanisads to see how redundant they are.

There is no doubt that Uddalaka speaks of the *atman* or soul. However by soul he means something very different from what the idealists of the Upanisads mean. When in the company of certain other scholars, he goes to the king Asvapati Kaikeya,

The king said to Uddalaka Aruni: 'Gautama! Whom do you reverence as the *atman* (soul)?'
'The earth indeed, Sir, Oh King', said he.[88]

From the point of view of the king, this is an unsatisfactory answer. Nevertheless it shows that Uddalaka is much too earth-minded or this-worldly a thinker to have any preference for the spiritualist or idealist outlook. Therefore when he speaks to his son about the *atman* and wants the son to realise that, like everything else in the universe, Svetaketu also is made of nothing but the original *sat*, he cannot refer by this to any pure spirit or anything like the mass of bare consciousness that Yajnavalkya and others speak of. In short, in the context under consi-

88. *Ch. Up.* v.17.1.

deration, Uddalaka uses the word *atman* evidently in the figurative sense of the essential stuff of everything, including man.

But what about final release or liberation? How can Uddalaka, asks Ramanuja, speak of a material first cause to "Svetaketu, who is desirous of the final release?"[89] "If", he continues, "on the other hand, the text would teach that the non-intelligent *pradhana* is the general cause, it could not possibly teach that meditation on this *pradhana* being a man's self is the means towards his Release."[90] Argues Samkara:

> If the non-intelligent *pradhana* were denoted by the term *sat* and did comprehend—by means of the phrase 'that art thou'—persons desirous of final release who as such are intelligent, the meaning could only be 'Thou art non-intelligent'; so that scripture would virtually make contradictory statements to the disadvantage of man, and would thus cease to be a means of right knowledge. But to assume that the faultless *sastra* is not a means of right knowledge would be contrary to reason. And if the *sastra*, considered as a means of right knowledge, should point out to a man desirous of release, but ignorant of the way to it, a non-intelligent self as the real self, he would—comparable to the blind man who had caught hold of the ox's tail—cling to the view of that being the self, and thus never be able to reach the real self different from the false self pointed out to him; hence he would be debarred from what constitutes man's good, and would incur evil.[91]

From Uddalaka's standpoint, however, all these discussions are really strange. They presuppose one assumption of which Uddalaka has no awareness at all—the assumption that Svetaketu approaches him for philosophical illumination which alone can satisfy the desire for final release or *moksa*. Though such is the usual context in which, in the Upanisads, King Janaka for example invites Yajnavalkya to initiate him in the secret wisdom imagined to lead to immortality, the actual context in which Uddalaka

89. Ramanuja on *Br.Su.* i.1.7.
90. *Ib.*
91. Samkara on *Br.Su.* i.1.7.

is described to deliver his philosophical discourse is different altogether. Nothing whatsoever is mentioned in the *Chandogya Upanisad* about Svetaketu's desire for final release. What the text says is simply as follows:

After twelve years of scriptural studies, Svetaketu returns home. Then his father asks him: 'Svetaketu, my dear, since you are conceited, think yourself learned, and are proud, did you also ask for that teaching whereby what has not been heard of becomes heard of, what has not been thought of becomes thought of, what has not been understood becomes understood?' This is something completely new to the son, who naturally feels bewildered. But the father explains that what he is talking of is the first principle behind the multiplicity of nature—like earth underlying all earthen objects. Therefore, from the actual contents of the text, the assumption that Uddalaka is approached by Svetaketu because the latter is 'desirous of final release' is completely gratuitous. There is no question of the desire for final release either from the standpoint of the father or of the son. What the text mentions is some intellectual or essentially scientific curiosity of Uddalaka and his anxiety to rouse it also in the son—the same curiosity that leads Thales to enquire into the first cause of the world.

The crucial point for understanding Uddalaka is to note that he represents a trend of thinking altogether different from the idealism of the Upanisads. As a matter of fact, the Upanisadic literature contains many a clue to this, and we have already noted some of them. We shall mention here only one more. In a legend occurring both in the *Brhadaranyaka*[92] and the *Chandogya Upanisad*,[93], it is clearly told that Uddalaka has not even an idea of the peculiar doctrine of the transmigrating soul then taking shape among the Ksatriya nobles.[94] This legend, as indicative of the futility of bringing Uddalaka's views in har-

92. *Br. Up.* vi.2.1ff.
93. *Ch. Up.* v.3.1ff.
94. See Hume TPU intro. 54.

mony with the idealist outlook that eventually dominates the Upanisadic period, is decisive:

Svetaketu Aruneya attended an assembly of the Pancalas. Then Pravahana Jaibali said to him, 'Young man, has your father instructed you?'

'He has indeed, Sir.'

Pravahana Jaibali then put five questions to him relating to the transmigration of the soul: 'Do you know unto what creatures go forth hence?' 'Do you know how they return again?' 'Do you know the parting of the two ways—one leading to the gods, one leading to the fathers?' etc., etc. Svetaketu had to confesss his ignorance about all these. Pravahana scornfully remarked, 'Now, pray, how did you say of yourself that you had been instructed? Indeed, how could one who would not know these things speak of himself as having been instructed?'

Distressed, Svetaketu returned to his father and said: 'Verily, indeed, without having instructed me, you, Sir, said: I have instructed you. Five questions a fellow of the princely class has asked me. I was not able to explain even one of them.' Uddalaka Aruni listened to these questions and said, 'As you have told them to me here, I do not know even one of them. If I had known them, how would I not have told them to you?'

So Uddalaka Aruni—also known as Gautama—went to the king's court and begged of the king to be instructed on the five questions put to his son. The king became troubled and said, 'As to what you have told me, Oh Gautama, this knowledge has never yet come to Brahmins before you; and therefore in all the world the rule belonged to the Ksatriya only.' And then the Ksatriya noble imparted the knowledge to Uddalaka.

All this is totally alien to Uddalaka's own thoughts. Engrossed in the problem of the ultimate stuff from which originates the infinite variety of nature and aware of nothing called soul—i.e. the essence of everything—apart from the material world, this early scientist is trying to work out in his own way the evolution of the entire psychophysical organisation from three material elements which he knows as heat, water and food, and the potentials of which constitute the original being or *sat*. Apart from this

sat or over and above it, he knows nothing that can be considered as the essence of the human being. Hence is his famous formula: *tat tvam asi*, 'that thou art'.

The later Indian tendency to look at the entire Upanisadic literature as scriptural and hence as containing a monolithic doctrine proves a manysided disaster for the objective understanding of the ancient Indian philosophical tradition. One aspect of this is the failure to recognise the extremely interesting position of Uddalaka Aruni, perhaps the first Indian scientist known to us who boldly claims that mind or consciousness—like life (breath= *prana*) itself—is only a product of matter, and who goes to the extent of demonstrating it experimentally. To the later Indian idealists such a view is nothing short of a calamity. Therefore the Vedantists do their best to twist his theory into some sort of idealism.

Among the modern scholars, we are indebted specially to Jacobi and Ruben for the right revaluation of Uddalaka's philosophy. Here is how Ruben has put it:[95]

"My revered teacher Herman Jacobi was the first to maintain that Uddalaka taught some materialistic elements. He started from the struggle between the later Samkhyas who claimed that the *sat* of Uddalaka was matter *(prakrti)* while later Vedantins interpreted it as brahman." Ruben himself has followed this suggestion:

In 1961, I finally wrote a paper about *the beginning of rational thinking in India,* describing how the struggle between materialism and idealism—between Uddalaka and Yajnavalkya—began in ancient India, when a few and small Indian states in the Ganges-valley had been just founded in the iron age in contrast to the mass of tribes, when class-struggle was beginning, when accordingly ideological competition started... Science like medicine started fighting against religion, physicists against Brahmins; astronomy, geography, law, state-doctrine etc. began: discussions became characteristic of this new period of ancient Indian history, doubt was in fashion in all fields of consciousness, and only then the struggle between mate-

95. Ruben 80.

rialism and idealism began on the basis of all this social and ideological struggle, especially after scientific thinking had begun, although the sciences were not yet fully developed. Uddalaka showed in his philosophy this new scientific type of thinking in his ways of arguing and proving his doctrines with reasoning and analogies, as a forerunner of later logicians who developed the analysis of *anumana, drstanta,* etc.[96]

In this connection, Ruben's paper on *Uddalaka and Yajnavalkya* needs to be read in full. But we quote here only another passage, because of its bearing on the subject of this chapter:

This materialism is further expressed in Uddalaka's doctrine that mind is becoming out of food, just as breath (life) out of water and speech out of fire. It was common among the ancient thinkers to identify speech with fire and breath (life) with water. But to claim that mind is food is stupendous. It was the climax of this text of Uddalaka teaching his son Svetaketu and he felt the necessity to prove this thesis. Therefore, he used the churning of milk as analogy to human digestion... And finally he made his son undergo the experiment of fasting in order to show that drinking water keeps him alive but avoiding food makes him lose his thinking (rather memory). When he eats again, his knowledge, his mind, comes back, as we would say, or his mind is recreated by food, as Uddalaka taught. This conception reminds us of later Samkhya ideas according to which *buddhi* is the first product of *prakrti*. But in Samkhya, *buddhi* works only in connection with the soul (*purusa*), while in Uddalaka's materialism there is no *purusa*, no eternal soul as the ultimate and only subject.[97]

Ruben refers here evidently to the later Samkhya. However, as we have already seen, there are grounds to think that even the Samkhya philosophy in its original form is presumably without a soul in the later sense. Admitting this, we have to look at Uddalaka's philosophy as having been basically the same as the Samkhya, though at the present stage of historical research it may be premature

96. *Ib.* 79-80.
97. *Ib.* 87.

to try to be exact about the relation between the two, i.e. to determine whether in Uddalaka's view is foreshadowed the Samkhya or whether he gives a new version of the Samkhya. What is still more important is to note that Uddalaka is the first philosopher who offers positive proofs for the origin of consciousness from matter, and therefore it is only logical for a sophisticated later philosopher like Jayanta Bhatta to see in these proofs a possible defence of the Lokayata materialism.

9. Matter and Consciousness : Modern Materialism

In the historical context to which they belong, the contributions of the Indian philosophers to the problem of matter and consciousness are very important. At the same time, it will be an error to overlook the characteristic limitation of the view of consciousness which Lokayata materialism shares in common with practically all forms of materialism before Marx. After tearing off the mystical veil on the problem of consciousness—after establishing the fact that it is nothing more than a natural phenomenon ultimately rooted in matter—a great deal of work remains to be done by the materialists for understanding the specific form of the nature, mutation and function of consciousness which it assumes in the case of the human beings, i.e. after the long course of biological evolution. Human consciousness is not something with which man is endowed once for all. Rather than being a static phenomenon, it is itself involved in the process of change and development in the most spectacular and diverse directions. The materialist understanding of the origin of consciousness, in order to be adequate, has to be inclusive of an understanding of this aspect of consciousness as well, for otherwise there is the risk of lapsing into a new fetish of consciousness or the risk of the idealist outlook, according to which consciousness is a unique phenomenon determining the course of human history.

Such an adequate materialist understanding of consciousness constitutes the point of departure of Marxist material-

ism from all forms of pre-Marxist materialism. We have to note this, if only for the purpose of seeing how the revolutionary *potentials* of the Lokayata materialism become *actual* in the modern scientific materialism known as Marxism after the name of its founder.

We shall mention here mainly two aspects of the Marxist view of consciousness particularly to see how by overcoming the characteristic limitation of pre-Marxist materialism, Marxism raises materialism to a qualitatively new level. First, the material origin of consciousness is adequately understood only when the basic material conditions of human life shaping human consciousness are taken note of. Secondly, the material origin of consciousness is liable to be misunderstood in so far as it is overlooked that consciousness, though arising out of matter, itself becomes an active creative force. This active role of consciousness, because it is ignored by the materialists before Marx, is left to be worked out only by the idealists, who want to convert it into a cult of pure consciousness.

In their first full statement of Marxism, Marx and Engels find it necessary to go into the details of the first of these two points, which, we quote at some length:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process...

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of,

imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of their ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the startingpoint is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as *their* consciousness.[98] Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.[99]

Thus the view of the material origin of consciousness, adequately understood, amounts to much more than the mere ontological assertion that unconscious matter is transformed into human body endowed with consciousness; it also opens new horizons for the real understanding of human history. Only this new understanding of history means the decisive victory of materialism over idealism. As Engels says:[100] "Now idealism was driven from its last refuge, the philosophy of history; now a materialist treatment of history was propounded, and a method found of explaining man's 'knowing' by his 'being', instead of, as hithertofore, his 'being' by his 'knowing'."

For all that we know of the Lokayata, the other severe limitation of its view of consciousness—which it shares in common with all forms of pre-Marxist materialism—is its failure to note the active role of consciousness. The fact that man's consciousness is basically determined by his material conditions does not mean that it is a lifeless pro-

98. Marx & Engels GI 37-8. 99. *Ib.* 42.
100. Engels AD 42.

duct of such conditions without any capacity of reacting on them, either by way of shaping them into new directions or by way of hindering their new development. Consciousness, though ultimately rooted in matter, also interacts on matter, and thus itself acquires the form of a creative force. The mind does not merely reflect nature in a passive sense; it also *participates* in nature—shapes it, masters it. or, in more popular language, leads man to conquer nature, sometimes comparatively slowly but sometimes at a revolutionary rapid pace, because this pace ultimately depends on the ripening of the objective material conditions which alone guarantee this mastery. Thus consciousness has also a creative role; only it is not the sole creative force, as imagined by the idealists. It is a creative force in the sense in which it draws its own power and strength from the conscious insight into nature and its laws. This new—dialectical—understanding of the mutual interaction between matter and consciousness is the result of the profound realisation that truth is the whole consisting of the organic unity of man and nature, and hence man's mastery of nature—in which consciousness plays such an important role—is to be understood in terms of nature itself. As Engels puts it, "Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature—but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly."[101]

We shall return to discuss this more fully in connection with the problem of freedom. For the present we shall note what a philosophical disaster it means for the pre-Marxist forms of materialism to ignore this active role of consciousness, reducing materialism merely to the passive contemplation of matter or nature. As Marx said,[102] "The

101. Engels DN 183. 102. Marx TF i.

chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object* or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the *active* side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed by idealism—but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such."

We have already seen what happens to consciousness when its active side is left in the custody of the idealists, who develop it. This view of consciousness gets swollen and inflated to the extent of a virtual deification, when consciousness comes out with the absurd demand of being recognised as the only reality. As contrasted with this illusory glorification of consciousness in the idealist philosophy, the recognition of the active role of consciousness in Marxist materialism results in seeing philosophy and the philosophers in a new role altogether: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."

PART IV

Allied Problems

Chapter 9

CHANGE AND PERMANENCE : DIALECTICS

1. Preliminary Remarks

We have not mentioned so far one important feature of the Indian controversy over the soul. Much of the polemics of the defenders of the soul theory is directed not against the Lokayatas but against the Buddhists, who also deny the soul and whose view is accordingly known as *anatma-vada* —the view that there is no soul. But the ground for their rejection of soul is different from that of the Lokayatas. The Buddhists are not keen on proving the origin of consciousness from matter. Still they are keen on proving that the soul is only a fiction with which the metaphysicians deceive themselves as well as others. The reason for this is, in the Buddhist view, there is nowhere any abiding entity at all. The most fundamental fact for them is ceaseless change or perpetual flux—the coming into being only for passing out of existence. There is, therefore, no question of admitting any soul, which, by definition, is something abiding or substantial.

Thus, in Indian philosophy, the rejection of the soul follows from two philosophical positions. The Lokayata rejection follows from the materialist outlook. But the Buddhist rejection is the consequence of the dialectical

outlook, the essence of which, as Engels says, is "the view that the whole of nature, from the smallest element to the greatest, from the grains of sand to suns, from protista to man, has its existence in eternal coming into being and passing away, in ceaseless flux, in unresting motion and change."[1]

These two outlooks—the materialist and the dialectical—fully converge on the rejection of the soul no doubt. However, in Indian philosophy, the two remain distinct and do not coalesce into materialist dialectics or dialectical materialism, as they do in the philosophy of Marx and Engels. Such a coalescence—or, more properly, the philosophical fulfilment of the two in each other—can be possible on the basis of a great deal of development and enrichment of both materialism and dialectics. However the development of materialist dialectics would have been historically premature in ancient and medieval philosophy, as that of India. One important reason for this is fully explained by Engels: "... philosophers were by no means impelled, as they thought they were, solely by the force of pure reason." What pushes them forward particularly in the modern period is the progress of natural science and industry. The decisive step towards materialist dialectics can be taken only when the empirical natural sciences provide philosophy with sufficient data justifying the step—data like the discovery of the cell, transformation of energy and biological evolution.[2] What philosophy can do without these is "filling in the missing facts by figments of the mind and bridging the actual gaps merely in imagination. In the course of this procedure it conceived many brilliant ideas and foreshadowed many later discoveries, but it also produced a considerable amount of nonsense, which indeed could not have been otherwise."[3]

Among the traditional Indian philosophers, neither the materialists nor the representatives of the dialectical out-

1. Engels DN 31.
2. Engels LF 40-1.
3. *Ib.* 41-2.

look have the advantage of drawing upon the advanced data provided by the empirical natural sciences. The decisive step towards materialist dialectics cannot thus be taken. But this does not mean that the Indian philosophers fail to conceive many briliant ideas or foreshadow many later discoveries. We have already seen how the Indian materialists do that. We are now going to see how the Indian representatives of the dialectical view also do the same.[4] In fact, the Buddhist rejection of the soul as forming an aspect of the view of universal flux is itself a revolutionary feature of ancient Indian philosophy. Here is how Rhys Davids[5] looks at it:

Buddhism stands alone among the religions of India in ignoring the soul. The vigour and originality of this new departure are evident from the complete isolation in which Buddhism stands, in this respect, from all other religious systems then existing in the world. And the very great difficulty which those European writers, who are still steeped in animistic preconceptions, find in appreciating, or even understanding the doctrine may help us to realise how difficult it must have been for the originator of it to take so decisive and so far-reaching a step in religion and philosophy, at so early a period in the history of human thought.

2. Dialectical Outlook in Indian Philosophy: Samkhya and Buddhism

So far we have mentioned only the Buddhists in connection with the dialectical outlook, because they are its representatives par excellence. But this does not mean that in Indian philosophy they are its only representatives, nor that they—throughout the long history of Buddhism as religion and philosophy—invariably represent the view with the same enthusiasm. Outside the strict circle of the Buddhists there are distinct tendencies to look at everything as perpetually changing—ceaselessly coming into being

4. Engels DN 226 refers to the high stage of development of dialectical thought among the Buddhists and Greeks.

5. Rhys Davids DB ii.242-3.

and passing away. But such tendencies do not have an impact on Indian thought comparable to that of the Buddhist theory of universal flux. Again, among the Buddhists the theory has a complex history; there are even tendencies to disown it altogether. Nevertheless even those among the Buddhists who want in fact to flout it are obliged to pretend that they are working out some novel interpretation of it, as it were. An outright formal rejection of the view proves practically impossible, consistent with the claim of basic affiliation to the teachings of the Buddha—so vital is the relevance of the view for Buddhism.

At the present stage of research, it is not possible to work out the full history of the dialectical outlook in Indian philosophy. Outside the circle of Buddhists, we have only a faint and distant glimpse of it, and even that, as we shall presently see, not without being mixed up with alien ideas. Among the Buddhists, again, its vicissitudes are interwoven with the history of the different sects, most of the writings of which are lost while those that survive primarily in Tibetan, Mongolian and Chinese translations are yet to be adequately analysed by the standard of modern scholarship. Therefore howsoever important the history of the dialectical outlook may be for the right understanding of the Indian philosophical heritage, what we can attempt here is at best a brief and tentative sketch of some of its salient features, as far as it is known with reasonable clarity.

The view of universal flux, as Stcherbatsky[6] has shown, is very ancient—traceable to a period earlier than the Buddha. We are yet to know how this view is first foreshadowed in Indian philosophy and how much it influences the Buddha's thoughts. Here is only an interesting point in this connection, which deserves further exploration. Stcherbatsky[7] observes:

We are faced in India by two quite different theories of a Universal Flux. The motion representing the world-process

6. Stcherbatsky CCB 65ff.
7. Stcherbatsky BL i.83.

is either a continuous motion, or it is a discontinuous, although compact, one. The latter consists of an infinity of discrete moments following one another almost without intervals. In the first case, the phenomena are nothing but waves or fluctuations (*vrtti*) standing out upon a background of an eternal, all-pervading undifferentiated Matter (*pradhana*) with which they are identical. The Universe represents a *legato* movement (*parinama-vada*). In the second case, there is no matter at all, flashes of energy (*samskara-vada=sanghata-vada*) follow one another and produce the illusion of stabilized phenomena. The Universe is then a *staccato* movement. The first view is maintained in the Samkhya system of philosophy, the second prevails in Buddhism. We have here a case, not quite unfamiliar to the general historian of philosophy, of two contrary philosophical systems both apparently flowing from the same first principle.

Stcherbatsky shows that in traditional Indian philosophy Udayana also feels confronted—though in his own way—basically by these two views of universal flux, namely that of the Samkhyas and of the Buddhists.[8]

For the purpose of historical understanding, it is necessary to have one clarification. The Buddhist view of flux referred to by Stcherbatsky is in fact its latest version: the Buddha himself preaches some simpler form of the theory of universal impermanence (*anityatva*), which is later converted into the theory of momentariness (*ksanikatva*). So also is the later version of the Samkhya philosophy substantially different from original Samkhya, while Stcherbatsky refers above mainly to the former.

All this suggests an interesting point. Just as the view of universal flux is known to have substantially changed in the history of Buddhism, so also it might have changed in the history of the Samkhya philosophy. At the present stage of research, such an assumption is somewhat conjectural. However, assuming some ground for this conjecture, we are to look at the wreck of original Samkhya as a very great disaster for our knowledge of the dialectical outlook in Indian philosophy.

8. *Ib.* i. 83n.

Nevertheless, according to the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha is directly influenced by the Samkhya philosophy. Some of the modern scholars argue in defence of this tradition. The historical possibility of the Buddha having drawn on the Samkhya philosophy is not to be rejected outright. Can it then be that the theory of universal flux—without which original Buddhism is really inconceivable—is indicative of the impact of the Samkhya on the Buddha's thoughts? Or is it that the Buddha works it out on his own, ignoring the Samkhya model which is known to him and by which he is otherwise influenced? A decisive answer to this question is perhaps not possible at the present stage of research. However, granting Stcherbatsky's theses that (1) the view of universal flux is pre-Buddhist in origin and that (2) in later Indian philosophy we come across basically two models of the view, namely that of the Samkhya and Buddhism, and granting further that the Buddha is directly influenced by the Samkaya—granting all this, it is difficult to reject outright two possibilities. First, there might have been a primitive core of the view of universal flux from which both Samkhya and Budhhism develop in divergent directions. Secondly, the Samkhya view of universal flux itself constitutes its primitive core and this goes substantially to the shaping of the Buddha's view. But Stcherbatsky proposes a third possibility, according to which the Buddhist theory is a reaction against the Samkhya view:[9]

It should be further noted that Buddhism, in its doctrine of universal change occurring every moment, sticks to the preceding Indian thinking—to the philosophical system of Samkhya, which also preached that everything changed eternally. The relation between both the systems is already being long felt, and has been discussed by European scholars. The Indians themselves have acknowledged it, though they have at the same time affirmed that this is more a relation of contrast than of similarity. They called both the systems radical, but juxtaposed one against the other, inasmuch as one affirmed that all was eternal and

9. Stcherbatsky FP 21-22.

the other that all was momentary. According to the doctrine of the Samkhya system, there actually exist, in all, only two ultimate sources: spirit and matter. The spirit is static, eternally calm. Matter, which also includes the whole of our cognitive apparatus, moves and changes eternally. The mutual relation of these two sources, as imagined by Kapila, the builder of the system, stands out most clearly in a picture to which the protagonists of the system like to refer. We shall mention below what significance this picture—which emerges before his mental gaze, embodies his principal thought and elucidates his system—generally has for the philosopher. The builder of Samkhya system imagined the relation between matter and spirit as a fidgety game of an actor before a silent spectator. Just as the spectator does not at all participate in the action, stands aside, calm and impassioned,—merely contemplates and does not act—similarly the spiritual source does not move or change, is eternally the same, and stands either aside or above the world process. For this, the whole of our cognitive apparatus had to be dissociated from the spiritual source and assigned to the eternally moving matter. The spirit only contemplates and does not act. Just as the actor all along changes his position, jests, speaks and generally works exclusively for the spectator, so also matter—though one abidng source in itself—constantly changes, indulges in the eternal game of light and shadow when this game is performed entirely for the silently contemplating consciousness. Such were the conceptions dominant in India before the appearance of Buddhism. The Buddha Sakyamuni himself studied philosophy from the teachers of the followers of this system. His own system, as I have already mentioned, sticks to the preceding system more as a protest than as an imitation.

Such indeed is the view we are perhaps obliged to accept, but subject to one assumption. And the assumption is that the Samkhya philosophy as we come across it in the admittedly later works like the *Samkhya-sutra*—from which the spectator-actor analogy is taken—or even the *Samkhya-karika* is the same as the philosophy originally propounded by Kapila. But there are important grounds to question this assumption. The presumption, on the contrary, is that the Samkhya, in its original form, is predo-

minantly the philosophy of primordial mattter, its concept of *purusa* is only later interpreted as a purely detached spirit or soul.

The way in which Santaraksita[10] describes the fundamentals of this philosophy, seems to retain its original emphasis: "It is out of primordial matter (*prakrti*), *itself, alone*, as equipped with all potencies, that the various products evolve, really having their essence in the same matter." Why does he put such special and extraspecial emphasis by way of using the words 'itself', 'alone'? Does he want us to look at this philosophy as that of primeval matter pure and simple? There are also independent grounds to think that the original emphasis of the philosophy is better understood if we are not misled by the later concept of the pure spirit in it.

In any case, notwithstanding the anomalous assumption of the *purusa*, the Samkhya too is in its own way a philosophy of perpetual flux—of coming into being and passing away—a philosophy of becoming, contesting the view of pure being or changeless absolute.

All this leads us to a very interesting conjecture. Could it be that the Samkhya philosophy, in its original form, represents some kind of a primitive tendency of reconciliating a basically materialist outlook with the essentially dialectical one?

3. Dialectical Outlook in Buddhism

But let us leave conjectures. Let us concentrate instead on the broad and definitely known facts about the view of universal flux in Indian philosophy.

These facts are mainly two.

First, particularly after the fading out of original Samkhya, the Buddhists become the representatives par excellence of this view in Indian philosophy.

Secondly, among the Buddhists, the view has an interesting history of its own. Perhaps its boldest and at the

10. Santaraksita *TS* 7.

same time the simplest expression forms a very important theme of the original teachings of the Buddha. After the death of the Buddha, however, when Buddhism is split into a number of sects, each trying to work out a distinct philosophical position of its own, there develops among some sects surreptitious resistance to the view, until it is completely rejected by Nagarjuna who, under the name of the Madhyamaka philosophy or Sunya-vada, revives the fundamentals of the Upanisadic philosophy of the indescribable Absolute transcending all multiplicity and change. Meanwhile the view itself survives mainly among the followers of a comparatively earlier sect of the Buddhists, the Sautrantikas, who add fresh philosophical considerations in its favour and convert it into the theory of momentariness.

But the actual writings of the Sautrantikas are irrevocabably lost. We shall later see the source of our knowledge of the way in which they want to retain and restate the theory of universal flux.

In view of this history of the dialectical outlook among the Buddhists, our brief discussion is divided mainly in three parts. First, the dialectical outlook as expressed in the original teachings of the Buddha. Secondly, surreptitious resistance to it in the later sects of Buddhism culminating in its curt rejection by Nagarjuna. Thirdly, the defence of the dialectical outlook by the Sautrantikas, in whose philosophy it becomes the theory of momentariness —a theory which a section of later Vijnana-vadins want to combine with their subjective idealism.

4. Original Buddhism : Causality and Change

Much is already written on the Buddha's distaste for metaphysics and we need not repeat it here. What almost obsesses the prophet is the fact of suffering or *duhkha*, which he sees everywhere and in everything. Accordingly he is interested above all in the way out of it. These two—suffering and the way out of suffering—thus constitute

the essence of original Buddhism. As the Buddha says, "Both in the past and now do I set forth *just this:* suffering and the cessation of suffering."[11]

Between these two basic propositions there is logically also a third one. It is concerning the understanding of the basic fact of suffering.

The essential point of this understanding is the theory of universal causation, which the Buddha calls *pratitya-samutpada.*[12] But this view of causation, though used in the Pali canons primarily to explain the series of factors ultimately accounting for the fact of suffering, has, in early Buddhist philosophy, an intrinsic importance of its own. As Rhys Davids[13] says:

> But the reason for that importance only becomes clear, when we look away from the *duhkha* (suffering) to which the formula is so often applied, away too from the antecedents of *duhkha,* and consider all that is implied in the *pratitya-samutpada* by way of method and *Weltanschauung.*

The Buddha himself wants his followers to look at this theory of causation or *pratitya-samutpada* as the essence of his teaching or *dharma* (law). Sariputra, one of the closest personal disciples of the Buddha, is reported to say, "The Exalted One has said that he who sees the *pratitya-samutpada,* sees the *dharma,* and he who sees the *dharma* sees the *pratitya-samutpada.*"[14]

Such an emphasis on the theory of causality or *pratitya-samutpada* to the extent of identifying it with the central teaching of the Buddha—with *dharma* or law as he understands it—is extremely important for our present discussion, because in original Buddhism this theory of causality is so much intertwined with the theory of universal flux that the latter is understood either as the im-

11. Quoted Rhys Davids DB iii.44.
12. Instead of the Pali words of the early Buddhist texts, I have mainly used in this chapter their Sanskrit equivalents.
13. Rhys Davids DB iii.45.
14. *Ib.* iii.44n.

mediate implication of the former or even identified with it. For discussing the dialectical outlook of original Buddhism, therefore, it is desirable first to be clear about this theory of causation itself.

Pratitya-samutpada is literally rendered as the theory of 'dependent origination'. But the typical formula by which this is expressed in the early canonical works of the Buddhists is more explicit. "Let us", says the Buddha, "put aside questions of the Beginning and the End. I will teach you the *dharma:* That being thus, this comes to be. From the coming to be of that, arises this. That being absent, this does not happen. From the cessation of that, this ceases."[15]

The formula thus has two aspects—positive and negative. Positively it means the 'arising' or coming into being of each and every thing, subject to the presence of some specific condition, or, more properly, the collocation of a number of conditions (*samudaya*). Evidently such conditions or their collocation can never be something stable or immutable, inasmuch as—according to the same view of causality—they in their turn come into being subject to the conditions of their own. The conditions of something coming into being have themselves to come into being and are thus unstable; hence that which comes into being subject to such unstable conditions is, by its very nature, itself unstable—i.e. destined to pass out of existence (*nirodha*).

This negative aspect of the formula, together with its positive aspect—i.e. "the process of *samudaya* and *nirodha* as a natural and universal law"—flashes before the Buddha as some kind of intuition or vision, as it were. It is the vision of universal impermanance. The Buddhist sacred works describe him as saying, "Coming to pass! Coming to pass! At that thought there arose in me a vision into things not called before to mind, and knowledge arose, insight, wisdom, light arose."[16]

For a fuller understanding of the Buddha's view of uni-

15. Quoted *ib.* iii.44. 16. *Ib.* iii.46.

versal flux, it is desirable to see first the implications of his theory of universal causation. We are indebted to Rhys Davids for an inspired appreciation of it:[17]

> Not uncaused and causally, not by the fiat of *Isvara* (God) —Indra, Soma, Varuna, Brahma—did events happen, painful or otherwise; not as Job and the Psalmist taught —'God distributeth sorrows in his anger'. For 'God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day' (*Job* xxi, 17 & *Psalm* vii. 11). Events come impelled by preceding conditions, causes that man could by intelligence and good will, study and govern, suspend or intensify.
>
> Thus Buddhaghosa, in explaining the name *pratitya-samutpada*, points out that it *excludes* all theories of absolutism, nihilism, chance, irregular causation and indeterminism. And of such theories, it is concerning the implied rejection of the first two that he is most explicit...
>
> Let it be remembered that the 'immanent' absolutism opposed by Buddhism was chiefly the Brahmanic theosophy. According to this, the *atman* of the individual was not so much an efflux of the World-Atman, as was the latter immanent in, and identified with, each man-soul. 'In the beginning this world was only Soul, in the shape of a man ... world-guardian, world-lord, this that is my soul.' (*Br. Up.* i. 4.1; *Kaus. Up.* iii. 8). 'My Soul', therefore, was in that theosophy, the personal First Cause and Final Cause. And hence the *pratitya-samutpada* of Buddhism was as decided a negation of all teleology as was the theorem of Demokritus and his master Leukippus, that 'nothing happens by chance, but everything through a cause and of necessity'.
>
> Had the fates been kinder to the writings of the Atomist of Abdera, had the 'teleological reaction' not been led by two men of such extraordinary genius as Plato and Aristotle, it is conceivable that the whole philosophy, not to say the *dharma*, of the West, might have flowed along a channel in which the influence of the *mikros* and the *megas Diakosmos* might have brought both that philosophy and that *dharma* more nearly parallel to the informing principle of the *pratitya-samutpada*. As it happened, Europe learned from Athens compromise and comprehensiveness, learned to believe in a universe governed partly

17. *Ib.* iii.45-7.

by necessity and partly by chance, learned to combine belief in unchanging natural law with belief in first and final causes.

And so gradually has the realm of regular, causal sequence encroached upon that of the casual and the arbitrary, that on no period in the intellectual development of Europe can we place our finger and say: Here the concept of a universe governed, as to its every movement and happening, by natural causation, was brought home to the minds of men,—to the mind of one man. There is nothing resembling the intellectual earthquake caused half a century ago by that extension of the law of causation: the theory of evolution. Or was there some such milestone of rational development reached, when Demokritus formulated the philosophy of Atomism, and won renown as a great prophet and teacher of mankind?

In the history of Indian thought, on the other hand, we can point to such an epoch-making crisis, we can discern the significance of the law of universal causation breaking in on a great mind with a flash of intuition. The law, we read, stands as fundamental, whether Tathagatas have arisen or not. But the Tathagata penetrates and masters it, and delivers the knowledge thereof to the world.

5. The Buddha and Heraclitus

All this, in appreciation of the first full assertion of the views of universal natural causation, reads inspired indeed. However in the enthusiasm to see the basic similarity from this point of view between the position of the Buddha and that of Democritus, Rhys Davids, in the passage just quoted, has missed to emphasise the much more significant Greek parallel, namely the thoughts of Heraclitus. What directly follows from the Buddha's *pratityasamutpada*—or, what is perhaps even only another way of putting the same—is the view of universal flux, the ceaseless coming into being and passing away. And this is precisely what Heraclitus also argues in ancient Greece. As Stcherbatsky[18] says,

The idea that there is no stability in the external world and that existence is nothing but a flow of external be-

18. Stcherbatsky BL i.82-3.

coming, is familiar to us in the history of Greek philosophy where in the person of Heraclitus it makes an episode in its early period, an episode which was soon forgotten in the subsequent development of Greek thought. We find it again in India as the foundation of a system whose roots go back into the VIth century B.C. But here it is not an episode; it has an incessant development through a variety of vicissitudes, in a series of elaborate systems, and after an agitated life of fifteen centuries it forsakes its native soil only to find a new home in other Buddhist countries.

We are interested at the moment in the first phase of this history, i.e. in the theory of perpetual flux as preached by the Buddha. We are indebted to H. Oldenberg for a brilliantly lucid analysis, who shows that it is practically but another way of expressing the view of causality or *pratitya-samutpada.*

As a convenient starting point of this discussion, Oldenberg begins with the following passage attributed to the Budhha:[19]

In this monk, O disciples. who thus regards himself and rules his consciousness, who is immovably intent thereon in holy effort and is steadfast in self-culture. there arises a sensation of pleasure. Then he knows as follows: 'In me has arisen this pleasurable sensation: this has arisen from a cause. not without a cause. Where lies this cause? It lies in this body of mine. But this body of mine is impermanent, has become, been producd by causes. A pleasurable sensation, the cause of which lies in the impermanent, originated, cause-produced body—how can it be permanent?' Thus, as well with regard to the body as to the pleasurable sensation, he commits himself to the contemplation of impermanence, transitoriness, evanition, renunciation, cessation, resignation. While he commits himself to the contemplation of impermanence, etc., as well with regard to the body as to the pleasurable sensation, he desists from all yearning propensity based on the body and on pleasurable sensation.

Oldenberg observes,[20]

He who is not repelled by the tedious minuteness of this discursive style, will find here a view very important for

19. Oldenberg 248. 20. *Ib.* 248-9.

the thought-fabric of Buddhism: the association of the impermanent and transitory with that which is produced by an operation of causality. Causality, or to translate more accurately the Indian word (*pratitya-samutpada*), the origin (of one thing) in dependence (on another thing), represents a relation existing between two members, of which the one, and because of it necessarily the other, is at no moment unaltered. There is no being subject to the law of causality, that does not resolve itself, when analysed, into process of self-changing, of becoming. In the continuous oscillation, ruled by the natural law of causality, between being and not-being, consists alone the reality of the things which make up the contents of this world.

Here is one of the most significant passages in which the Buddha is said to describe this view:[21]

This world, O Kaccana, generally proceeds on a duality—on the 'it is' and 'it is not'. But O Kaccana, whoever perceives in truth and wisdom how things originate in this world, in his eyes there is no 'it is not' in this world. Whoever, Kaccana, perceives in truth and wisdom how things pass away in this world, in his eyes there is no 'it is' in this world... 'Everything is', this is the one extreme, O Kaccana. 'Everything is not', this is the other extreme. The Perfect One, O Kaccana, remaining far from both these extremes, proclaims the truth in the middle.

And what is this truth in the middle? As Oldenberg[22] puts it, "This world is the world's process, the formula of causality is the expression of this process of the world."

All this cannot but be reminiscent of what Heraclitus said, and we quote Oldenberg again to see how practically the same symbolisms are used both by the Buddha and Heraclitus to express the same dialectical outlook:[23]

Imagination, which in the service of inquiring thought seeks for types and symbols of formless ideas in the form-world of nature, has at all times when its object was to represent a being, the characteristic of which is movement, chosen with decided preference two images: the flowing stream of water and the self-consuming flame. In the dark sayings of Buddha's great contemporary, Heraklitos, who

21. Quoted *ib.* 249.
22. *Ib.* 249.
23. *Ib.* 259-61.

in his theory of the being of beings more nearly approaches Buddha than does any other Greek thinker, both comparisons are constantly recurring in the foreground: 'Everything flows on', the universe is 'an ever-living fire'. The figurative language of Buddhism also employs both the stream and the flame as symbols of the restless movement involved in every state of being. But in this the Buddhist figure differs from that of the Ephesian, that Buddhism, ignoring every metaphysical interest which has not its root in an ethical interest, does not in its view of the water and the flame contemplate the mere movement, the bare becoming only, but above all the to-human-life-so-momentous and destructive power of this movement, this becoming . . .

But no other picture so perfectly adapted for Buddhism to express the nature of being as the figure of flame, which, remaining in apperently restful invariability, is yet only a continuous self-production and self-consumption, and in which at the same time is embodied, with a still more impressive reality for the Indians than for us, the tormenting power of heat, the enemy of blissful coolness, the enemy of happiness and peace . . . (Said the Buddha:) 'The whole world is in flames; the whole world is wrapped in smoke, the whole world is wasted by fire; the whole world quakes.

But to us in this connection more important than the employment of the metaphor of fire, from an ethical point of view, is its introduction to illustrate the metaphysical nature of being as of a continuous process. It is reserved to the later texts to work up this metaphor to perfect clearness; but it already exists in the sacred writngs, although we feel how thought has here to struggle with expression. Beings resemble a flame; their state of being, their becoming reborn is a flaming cleaving of self, a feeding of self upon the fuel which the world of impermanence supplies.

6. Self, Personality and Rebirth

But what is meant by the 'self' in original Buddhism? This is one of the most widely discussed problems. Perhaps a convenient startingpoint of our understanding is to see what it does not definitely mean.

The immediate consequence of viewing everything as

becoming—of coming into being and passing away—is the rejection of all the conceptions of the soul that are in circulation in the Buddha's times.

The oldest and simplest—though perhaps also the most widely circulated view in Buddhist India—is peculiarly a materialist one. "The notion was that of a double—shadowy no doubt, and impalpable—but still a physical double of the physical body; and made up, like the body, of the four elements. When the soul was away the body lay still, without moving, apparently without life, in trance, or disease or sleep."[24] Another view, also widely prevalent then, is that the soul is a special spiritual substance, located within the body, having alone the capacity to think, feel and will. In the circles of the comparatively more sophisticated thinkers of the Upanisads, there is also the tendency to identify the spiritual substance within us with the spiritual essence of the universe, the world-soul. This world-soul is often theistically conceived as god, who creates and destroys the universe, though, among the extreme idealists, the identification of the individual soul with it is so complete that the world is left with no status of its own.

All these conceptions of the soul have one point in common. The soul is an abiding substance, which remains aloof from the process of birth, decay and death. The Buddha's view of universal flux demolishes at one stroke, as it were, all the views of the soul then in circulation.

Still the Buddha is obliged to talk of the self, though not in the sense of an abiding soul at least in the sense in which we broadly use the word personality these days. What does he mean by it?

In one of the early texts discussing the question, he expresses the view that "personality, individuality is only a convenient expression in common use in the world, and therefore made use of also by the Tathagata, but only in such a manner that he is not led astray by its ambiguity, by its apparent implication of some permanent entity."[25]

24. Rhys Davids DB ii.241.
25. *Ib.* ii.243.

We may quote here a portion of the text to see how the Buddha wants to put this view[26]:

Said the Buddha: 'The following three modes of personality Potthapada, are commonly acknowledged in the world: material, immaterial and formless. The first has form, is made up of the four elements and is nourished by solid food. The second has no form, is made up of mind, has all its greater and lesser limbs complete, and all the organs perfect. The third is without form and is made up of consciousness only. Now I teach a doctrine, Potthapada, with respect to each of these, that leads to the putting off of that personality... And outsiders, Potthapada, might question us thus: What then, Sir, is that material or that mental or that formless mode of personality for the putting away of which you preach such a doctrine?... And to that I should reply: Why this very personality that you see before you is what I mean.

Now when he had thus spoken, Citta, the son of the elephant trainer, said to the Exalted One: 'At that time, Sir, when a man is in possession of any one of the three modes of personality, are the other two unreal to him then? Is it only the one he has, that is real?'

Said the Buddha. 'At the time, Citta, when any one of the three modes of personality is going on, then it does not come under the category of either of the other two. Just, Citta, as from a cow comes milk, and from the milk curds, and from the curds butter, and from the butter ghee, and from the ghee junket: ... and when it is curds it is not called by any of the other names; and so on. Just so, Citta, when any one of the three modes of personality is going on, it is not called by the name of the other. For these, Citta, are merely names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world. And of these a Tathagata makes use indeed, but is not led astray by them.'

There are thus only a number of ever-changing components, the togetherness of which is conventionally called personality. What is thus called personality is itself always changing. "When the change has reached a certain point, it is convenient to change the designation, the name, by which the personality is known—just as in the case of the

26. *Ib.* ii.259-63.

products of the cow. But the abstract term is only a convenient *form of expression.* There never was a personality, *as a separate entity,* all the time."[27]

Elsewhere, in the early Pali works, the same idea of personality being only a convenient verbal designation of the assemblage of a number of essentially transitory physical and mental elements is sought to be expressed with the analogy of a chariot. Mara, the tempter, who wants to confuse men by error and heresy, appears before the nun Vajira and says to her, 'Thou art that by which personality is constituted, the creator of the person; the person that has an origin, that thou art; thou art the person that passes away.' She answers, 'What meanest thou, Mara, that there is a person. False is thy teaching. This is only a heap of changeful dispositions; here there is not a person. As in the case where the parts of a chariot come together, the word *chariot* is used, so also where the five groups are, there is a person. That is a common notion. Pain alone it is that comes, pain that exists and that passes away, nothing else but pain arises, nothing else but pain vanishes again.'[28]

This, as Oldenberg has shown, forms the original nucleus of the later elaborate discourse on personality delivered by the Buddhist sage Nagasena to the Greek prince Menander (called Milinda in the text)[29]:

King Milinda said to the saint Nagasena, 'Venerable sir, how art thou known? What is thy name?'

'I am named Nagasena, O great king. But Nagasena is just a name, an appellation, a designation, an epithet, a mere word. Here there is no subject—i.e., no permanent individual implied by the use of the word.'

The king said, 'Well to be sure! let the five hundred Yavanas and the eighty thousand monks hear it! This Nagasena says: Here there is no subject. Can any one assent to this?

27. *Ib.* ii.263n.

28. Oldenberg 258.

29. See SBE. xxx.40-5. Abridged translation broadly based on Oldenberg 251-7.

And the king went on, addressing the venerable Nagasena, 'If, O venerable Nagasena, there is no subject, who is it then that provides you with what you need—clothes and food, lodging and medicine for the sick? Who is it that enjoys all these things? Who walks in virtues? Who expends labour upon himself? Who attains the path and the fruits of holiness? Who attains *nirvana*? Who kills, who steals? Who walks in pleasures? Who deceives? Who drinks? Who commits the five deadly sins? Thus there is then no good and no evil. There is no doer and no originator of good and evil actions. Good action and evil action bring no reward and bear no fruit. If anyone were to kill thee, venerable Nagasena, even he would commit no murder.'

Then the king asked him, 'Sir, you tell me that your brethren in the order are in the habit of addressing you as Nagasena. Now what is that Nagasena? Are the hairs Nagasena?'

'No, great king.'

'Are nails, or teeth, skin or flesh or bone Nagasena?'

'No, great king.'

'Is the bodily form Nagasena?'

'No, great king.'

'Are the sensations Nagasena?'

'No, great king.'

'Are the perceptions, dispositions, the consciousness Nagasena?'

'No, great king.'

'Or, Sir, is Nagasena the combination of corporeal form, sensations, perceptions, dispositions and consciousness?'

'No, great king.'

'Or,is Nagasena something other than the corporeal form, and the sensations, perceptions, dispositions and consciousness?'

No, great king.'

'Wherever I look then, Sir, I nowhere find a Nagasena. A mere word, sir, is Nagasena. What, then, is Nagasena? Thou speakest false, then, Sir, and thou liest. There is no Nagasena.'

Then the venerable Nagasena asked the king, 'How did you come here, O great king?—On foot, or on a vehicle?' 'I do not travel on foot, Sir. I have come on a chariot.'

And then the saint turned the same course of reasoning against the king, which the king had himself used against him. What was the chariot? Was it the axle, the wheels, frame, reins, yoke, spokes or goad? None of these was the chariot. The chariot, moreover, was neither the combination of all these parts, nor was it anything else beyond these.

'Wherever I look then, O great king, I nowhere find the chariot. A mere word, O king, is the chariot. What, then, is the chariot? Thou speakest false, then, O great king, and thou liest. There is no chariot. Thou art, O great king, suzerain of all India. Of whom, therefore hast thou any dread, that you speakest untruth? Well, to be sure! Let the five hundred Yavanas and the eighty thousand monks hear it. This king Milinda has said: I have come here on a chariot. Then I said: If thou hast come on a chariot, O great king, then explain the chariot. And he could not point out the chariot. Can any one assent to this?'

When he spoke thus, the five hundred Yavanas shouted approval of the venerable Nagasena and said to the king Milinda, 'Now, O great king, speak if thou canst.'

But king Milinda said to the venerable Nagasena, 'I do not speak untruly, venerable Nagasena. It is on account of its having all these things—the axle, wheels, frame, reins, yoke, spokes or goad—the appellation, the designation, the epithet, the word *chariot* is used.'

'Good indeed, great king, thou knowest the chariot. And in the same way, O king, with reference to my hair, my skin and bones, to corporeal form, sensations, perceptions, dispositions and consciousness, the word Nagasena is used. But here the subject, in the strict sense of the word, there is none. Thus also, great king, has the nun Vajira explained in the presence of the Exalted One: "As in the case where the parts of a chariot come together, the word chariot is used, so also where *the five groups* are, there is a person. That is the common notion."'

'Well done, venerable Nagasena! Wonderful Nagasena! Many questionings indeed arose in my mind and thou hast resolved them.'

In this train of reasoning designed to reject a permanent personality in the conventional sense of the term, more emphasis is obviously laid on the analysis of the relation between the parts and the whole. Apparently, in the

Buddha's times, this problem does not acquire so much of philosophical importance as it does in the later times when particularly the atomists want to prove that the 'whole' has a reality of its own over and above the mere parts. In asserting this, they find mainly the Buddhists as representing ther *purvapaksa,* because practically throughout the subsequent history of Buddhism it is claimed that over and above the mere parts there can be nothing real called the whole.

We need not digress to discuss the question whether the denial of the reality of the 'whole' over and above the 'parts' necessarily follows from the dialectical outlook or the theory of universal flux—i.e. whether even after raising dialectics to the new level of materialist dialectics it remains philosophically necessary to reject the reality of the 'whole', as is done in early Buddhism. What interests us at the moment is the theoretical position of early Buddhism itself. According to this, personality is only a convenient fiction for 'the group of the five', namely the physical group or the body and the four groups of mental elements, roughly meaning feelings, ideas, will and consciousness. All the elements in these groups are of course perpetually changing and since it is necessary to use some word for referring to such a fleeting group of changing elements, the Buddha feels that there is nothing wrong about the use of the conventional word personality, without being dupe of its conventional implications.

However if there is really nothing called the self beyond a mere conventional word or sound, how is the fact of personal identity to be explained? In the same text *Milindapanha,* Nagasena answers the question in the form of the following discourse[30]:

The king asked, 'Venerable Nagasena, after being born, does a man remain the same or does he become another being?'
'He neither remains the same nor becomes another.'
'Explain this with an example, please.'

30. SBE xxx.63f. cf de Bary 108.

'You were once, O great king, a tender, small and weak infant, lying on your back. Do you think that, grown up as you now are, you are the same infant?'

'No sir. The infant was one thing and I am now another.'

'But, O great king, in that case you had no father and mother, no instructor to teach you manners and wisdom... Is the school-going boy one being and the school-leaving one another? Is it that one person commits a crime while he who is punished (mutilated for it) is another one?'

Of course not, venerable sir. But what is your view on such question?'

I am the being as I was when a baby', said the saint, 'for through the continuity of the body, all the stages of life are included in a unity, though in the conventional sense.' 'Explain this with an illustration, please.'

'Can the lamp, kindled by one, burn all through the night?' 'Yes. It may.'

'But is the flame of the lamp burning at midnight the same as the flame that had burned in the first quarter of the night?'

'No, venerable sir.'

'Or, is the flame burning at the last quarter of the night the same that had burned during the midnight?'

No, venerable sir.'

'Is it, then, a fact that there is one lamp during the first quarter of the night, another at midnight and still another at the last quarter of the night?'

'No; the same lamp illumines throughout the night.'

'Similarly, O great king, is to be understood the continuity of phenomena. One person is born and another passes away; still the sequence appears to be continuous without any self-conscious substance: it is neither the same nor an altogether different one.'

As a consequence of such an understanding of the actual meaning of personality and personal identity, the theory of rebirth and transmigration too is understood by the Buddha in a different sense altogether. As Stcherbatsky[31] explains,

Just as a Buddhist allows the use of the words soul and

31. Stcherbatsky FP 19-20.

personality in a conventional sense usual for the people, similarly he conventionally speaks of the rebirth of the same person, though, in reality, any rebirth is already a new person, or, expressing still more correctly, an absolutely new collection of elements connected with its past by the inevitable law of causes and effects. In his sermons the Buddha himself liked to use the language of the ordinary people: he liked to speak of his own previous existences, of the past and future rebirths of his pupils and of other people. If it is remembered here that this is only a descriptive expression under which is hidden a deep and fine theory of the progress of life and its elements towards the ultimate ideal, there will be no contradiction between the doctrine of the non-existence of the soul and the so-called transmigration of souls.

In the *Milindapanha*, the theory of rebirth and transmigration is explained as follows[32]:

The king asked, 'Venerable Nagasena, can there be rebirth when the fact is that there is nothing that transmigrates?'

'Yes, O great king.'

'But how can this be possible at all? Would you, please, explain with an illustration.'

'Suppose, O great king, a man kindles one lamp from another. Does this mean that one lamp transmigrates to the other?'

'No, venerable sir.'

'Similarly, there is rebirth but no transmigration.'

7. Sociology : Private Property and the State

We may now pass on to have some idea of the sociology of the Buddha—particularly his view of private property, the social classes and the state—in so far as it directly follows from his dialectical outlook.

It may be convenient to begin this discussion with an observation of Stcherbatsky, where he shows the radical implications on the question of private property of the radical view of personality in early Buddhism[33]:

32. SBE xxx.111. cf de Bary 109.

33. Stcherbatsky FP 26.

Where there is personality, there is property belonging to it. Where there is *I*, there is also *my*. And where there is personal property, there necessarily emerges a love for it in one form or other. This attachment to personal property is the root of all evil, the root of every personal action as well as of social injustice. Thus, by negating the existence of the soul, Buddhism gives us a very profound philosophical basis for the negation of the right of personal property. What personal property can be possible where even the personality itself is not there? Therefore, a real Buddhist is only he who has renounced personal property—and not merely property but also family, home, etc.—once for all. In the history of world religions, of Christianity and Islam, we frequently find doctrines which negate property and advise that this be renounced. But Buddhism gives the most radical treatment of this question.

However let us not see in the Buddha's condemnation of private property more significance than it has. It is nothing, for example, comparable to the demand for the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production as an essential precondition for the positive emancipation of man, which is above all an emancipation from class exploitation and therefore possible only by the overthrow of the class structure of society. Not to speak of this, Buddhism never comes anywhere near the positive conception of freedom, viz freedom as attainable only by a greater mastery over nature based on a deeper insight into it and its laws. Such an understanding of freedom could not be developed during the Buddha's times. What is historically possible for him is to work out some palliative remedy for suffering, which he sees everywhere and in everything. All that he can suggest is to change the subjective attitude to the world—to subdue the 'mental intoxicants' and thereby to attain a quietude of the heart. Private property is to be renounced because, as the Buddha feels, it creates these mental intoxicants—longing, clinging, attachment, and so on. The philosophical view of the unreality of personality, he thinks, helps one to realise the foolishness of running after personal property and is thus an incentive to renounce private property.

But private property, as the Buddha understands it, is to be avoided within the *samgha*-s or communities of the monks. These monks are supposed to *renounce* the world, which in fact means that they are supposed to leave the world as it is. It is beyond the power of the prophet to interfere with the inexorable laws of history, which, during the Buddha's times, requires a greater intensification of private property in the hands of the despots, monarchs and merchants. The Buddha's demand for the abolition of private property is a demand for its abolition within the isolated pockets of society and it is not—what would have been historically premature—the demand for the abolition of private property from society as such. As the Buddha himself advises the brotherhood of monks[34]:

Live as islands unto yourselves, brethren, as refuges unto yourselves; take none other as your refuge; live with the Norm as your island, with the Norm as your refuge, take none other as your refuge.

But how does a brother live in an island unto himself, as a refuge unto himself, taking none other as his refuge? How does he live with the Norm as his island, with the Norm as his refuge, taking none other as his refuge?

Herein a brother, as to the body, as to feelings, as to thought, as to ideas, continues so to look upon these that he remains ardent, self-possessed and mindful, that he may overcome both the hankering and the dejection common in the world. Thus it is, brethren, that a brother lives as an island and as a refuge unto himself . . . with the Norm as an island and as a refuge, having no other refuge.

So it will be an error to make of the Buddha a revolutionary in our sense of the term. At the same time, it will be another error not to see what is actually revolutionary about his sociology—particularly in so far as it follows from his dialectical outlook—his view of everything being involved in perpetual flux.

The passage just quoted forms the concluding sermon of a dialogue the whole of which is designed to discuss the

34. Rhys Davids iv.74-5.

question of wealth, and of wickedness, aggressiveness and war as following from it. A superficial reading of the dialogue as a whole may give one the impression of a fairy tale as it were—the dream of a golden age in the past and the fall of man from it with the growth of wealth and hence also of the greed for wealth. But that would be misunderstanding the dialogue, or the main point sought to be emphasised in it by the Buddha in his own way. Equipped with no tool for socio-historical analysis in our sense —or, more strictly, possessing the only tool in the form of his intuitive vision of the dialectical outlook—the Buddha is trying nevertheless to understand and explain a momentous historical question, the question of the origin of wealth which, as he understands, creates wickedness, aggressiveness and war. And what is revolutionary about his understanding is not merely the total absence of any supernatural cant about the phenomena—and therefore the total absence of any tendency to invest them with any supernatural sanction as in the *Brahmana*-s and Upanisads—but above all the view that like everything else in the universe, wealth and the consequent aggressiveness and war, are subject to the relentless law of *pratitya-samutpada:* all these come into being subject to the collocation of a number of definite conditions and hence these are also destined to pass away.

From this point of view, Stcherbatsky's suggestion that the Buddha's rejection of private property is only a corollary of his rejection of soul and personal property, perhaps needs amendment. Still, in the Buddha's thoughts the rejection of the two is not unconnected. The soul is unreal, because there is nothing but perpetual flux—the coming into being and passing away. But so also is the power of wealth and private property. Like the soul and personality, private property too is subject to the relentless law of *pratitya-samutpada,* which, as we have seen, is the theoretical ground of the view of universal flux. It is, of course, understandable that the Buddha has to grope for expressions for the formulation of such a

momentous idea. And the expressions he uses cannot but appear to us to be rather archaic[35]:

Thus brethren, from goods not being bestowed on the destitute, poverty grew great . . . stealing, violence, murder, lying, evil speaking, adultery, abusive and idle talk, covetousness and ill-will, false opinion, incest, wanton greed and perverted lust . . . Among the humans, brethren, keen mutual enmity will become the rule, keen ill-will, keen animosity, passionate thought even of killing, in a mother towards her child, in a child towards its mother, in a father towards his child and a child towards its father, in brother to brother, in brother to sister, in sister to brother. Just as a sportsman feels towards the game that he sees, so will they feel.

Among such humans, brethren, there will arise a sword-period of seven days, during which they will look at each other as wild beasts; sharp swords will appear ready to their hands and they, thinking—'This is a wild beast! This is a wild beast'—will with their swords deprive each other of life.

Then to some of those beings it will occur: Let us not slay just anyone; nor let just anyone slay us! . . . Then this, brethren, will occur to those beings: Now only because we had gotten into evil ways, have we had this heavy loss of kith and kin. Let us now therefore do good. What can we do that is good? Let us now abstain from taking life. That is a good thing that we may take up and do. And they will abstain from slaughter, and will continue in this good way . . .

At that period, brethren, there will arise in the world an Exalted One name Metteyya (? Maitreya), an arhat, fully awakened, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, with knowledge of the worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men, an exalted one, a Buddha, even as I am now. He, by himself, will thoroughly know and see, as it were face to face, this universe, with its world of the spirits, its Brahmas and its Maras, and its world of recluses and Brahmins, of princes and peoples, even as I now, by myself, thoroughly know and see them. The truth, lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, lovely in its consummation, will he proclaim both in the spirit and in the letter, the higher life

. *Ib.* iv.69-74.

will he make known, in all its fullness and in all its purity, even as I do now. He will be accompanied by a congregation of some thousands of brethren, even as I am now accompanied by a congregation of some hundreds of brethren.

What is definite about all this is that the Buddha is not prophesying the coming of a leader to organise a revolutionary party for the final overthrow of a society every fabric of which is permeated with evil—evil that originally follows from the accumulation of wealth or private possession, or, as the Buddha puts it, from goods not being bestowed on the destitute'. The Buddha never visualises a revolutionary transformation of society. Nevertheless the origin of social evil and its eventual passing away, as he understands the entire process, cannot be looked at as a mere phantasy or a mythological imagination of the fall of man from an original golden age awaiting some ultimate salvation by a future messiah. Not that such elements are not at all there in the Buddha's thought. Still, what is decisive about his thought is the vision of the law of universal causation—*pratitya-samutpada*—the inescapable consequence of which is the view of universal flux. In accordance with this, the Buddha is trying to understand society, which he feels is permeated with greed, aggressiveness and evil in other forms. Hence he is obliged to conceive its coming into being and its eventual destiny of passing away. What is significant about his understanding of social evil is *not the way in which he conceives its origin and its passing away*, It is rather his *general theoretical position that, like everything else in the universe, social evil must itself be involved in the universal flux:* it cannot but come into existence subject to definite conditions and it cannot but ultimately pass away.

Its coming into being, as far as he can trace it, is connected with wealth or private possession; but its passing away can be conceived by him only in terms of moral revival under the leadership of a great enlightened saint. This—particularly the second point—is of course the

result of the inevitable historical limitations. But the basic theoretical position that there is nothing eternal about the social organisation—that everything in it has a definite beginning and therefore also a definite end—is a remarkable achievement of the dialectical outlook of early Buddhism. And this cannot but be reminiscent of Morgan's verdict on society based on private property, with which Engels concludes his work on *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*[36]:

A mere property career is not the final destiny of mankind, if progress is to be the law of the future as it has been of the past. The time which has passed away since civilisation began is but a fragment of the past duration of man's existence, and but a fragment of the ages yet to come. The dissolution of society bids fair to become the termination of a career of which property is the end and aim, because such a career contains the elements of self-destruction.

It is no use speculating whether, given modern terminologies, the Buddha would have formulated his verdict on property-oriented society in the same way. The fact is that modern terminologies are not there for him. Nevertheless, what is there for him—and the importance of which can in no way be overlooked—is the dialectical view, the relentless law of *pratitya-samutpada*. This leads him to express, in his own way, the view that a mere property career cannot be the final destiny of mankind: it comes into being subject to definite conditions and it is foredoomed to wither away.

In another dialogue forming part of the early canonical literature of the Buddhists, the implications of the dialectical outlook for the Buddha's sociology are worked out in a more remarkable manner. The main point of this dialogue —called the *Agganna Suttanta*—is to explain not only the origin of kingship but the broader question of the origin of the main strata of traditional Indian society—the four traditional castes. As the Buddha is trying to explain, such

36. Quoted Engels OF 291-2.

a society comes to being because of a number of specific conditions, and the inevitable consequence of this is that, because of the same relentless law of *pratitya-samutpada,* such a society is also destined to pass away. This significance of the dialogue may be entirely missed if we try to assess, in terms of contemporary sociology, the intrinsic worth of the Buddha's view of the origin of caste-oriented society. Weaker still is the Buddha's visualisation of the mode of the eventual passing away of this society: he can at best speak of his own *samgha*-s within which the rigidity of the castes is supposed to dissolve. However all these are not the points by which we are to judge the basic significance of the sociology of early Buddhism. This significance is to be sought elsewhere, and that is the view that, like *everything else in the universe, the caste-oriented society too comes into being only under certain specific conditions and hence it is also destined to pass away.*

Before passing on to see how the Buddha expresses his own view of the caste-oriented society, it may be convenient to remember the other view then in circulation, i.e. the view sought to be negated by the Buddha. From the times of the *Brahmana*-s and Upanisads, there develops the zeal to sanctify the caste-oriented society by claiming for it a divine origin. And since it is supposed to be a divine creation, it is impossible—and of course impious—to try to change its basic structure. The caste-oriented society, in other words, is beyond the range of change altogether: if it has an origin in the divine will, the same will give it life eternal. It would be tedious to quote the passages from the *Brahmana*-s and Upanisads to show how such a view of the essential unalterableness of caste society takes shape. But it may be sufficient for our purpose to quote a few couplets from Manu, in whose legal codes is summed up the Brahmanical view of the caste society sanctified by the divine sanction for it. As Manu[37] puts it,

37. Manu i.87-91.

But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate duties and occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet. To Brahmins He assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of gifts). The Ksatriya He commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda) and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures; the Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money and to cultivate land. One occupation only the Lord prescribed to the Sudra—to serve meekly even these three (other) castes.

Such a view, though codified by Manu at a comparatively later date, comes down from a distant antiquity and is fully known to the Buddha. The Brahmin Vasettha tells him how the Brahmins themselves claim to prove their superiority: "Only the Brahmins are genuine children of Brahma, born of his mouth, offspring of Brahma, created by Brahma, heirs of Brahma."[38] But the Buddha laughs at the prima facie absurdity of such a claim: "Surely, Vasettha, the Brahmins have quite forgotten the past when they say so? On the contrary, the Brahmani-s, the wives of Brahmins, are known to be fertile, are seen to be with child, bringing forth and nursing children. And yet it is these very womb-born Brahmins who say that... Brahmins are genuine children of Brahma, born from his mouth, his offspring, his creation and his heirs!"[39]

Thus the ground on which the Brahmins want to prove their social superiority is to the Buddha a mere myth. Still the fact of the caste-divided society is there: "There are these four classes, Vasettha, nobles, Brahmins, tradesfolk, work people."[40] And that needs an explanation.

And the explanation of caste-society which the Buddha offers cannot but be a mere illustration of his general view of everything coming into existence only to pass away.

In the dialogue under discussion, the Buddha's view of

38. Rhys Davids DB iv.78. 39. *Ib.* 40. *Ib.* iv.79.

the origin of the caste-society is only an episode of his general theory of evolution. It begins with an account of a period when 'all had become one world of water, dark and of darkness that maketh blind'.[41] Next is formed the surface of the earth: "Even as a scum forms on the surface of boiled milky rice that is cooling, so did the earth appear."[42] Then outgrowths appear on the soil "as the springing up of the mushroom". Then appear the creeping plants and then rice, from where we take up the story of evolution to see the Buddha's view of the origin of caste-society[43]:

Then Vasettha, when the creepers had vanished for those beings (originally not fully human but gradually assuming the human form), rice appeared ripening in open spaces... Where of an evening they gathered and carried away for supper, there next morning the rice stood ripe and grown again... Then those beings feasting on this rice in the clearings, feeding on it, nourished by it, so continued for a long while... Then Vasettha, this occurred to some being of a lazy disposition: Lo now! why do I wear myself out fetching rice for supper in the evening, and in the morning for breakfast? What if I were to fetch enough rice for supper and breakfast together? So he gathered at one journey enough rice for the two meals together... Now from the time, Vasettha, that those beings began to feed on hoarded rice, powder enveloped the clean grain, and husk enveloped the grain... Then those beings, Vasettha, gathered themselves and bewailed this, saying: Evil customs, sirs, have appeared among men... Come now, let us divide off the rice fields and set boundaries thereto! And so they divided off the rice fields and set up boundaries round it.

Now some beings, Vasettha, of greedy disposition, watching over his own plot, stole another plot and made use of it. They took him and holding him fast, said: Truly, good being, thou hast wrought evil in that, while watching thine own plot, thou hast stolen another plot and made use of it. See, good being, that thou do not do such a thing again! Ay, sirs, he replied. And a second time he did so. And yet a third. And again they took him and admonished him. Some smote him with the hand, some with clods,

41. *Ib.* iv.82. 42. *Ib.* 43. *Ib.* iv.84-91.

some with sticks. With such a beginning, Vasettha, did stealing appear, and censure and lying and punishment became known.

Now those beings, Vasettha, gathered themselves together, and bewailed these things, saying: From our evil deeds, sirs, becoming manifest, inasmuch as stealing, censure, lying, punishment have become known, what if we were to select a certain being, who should be wrathful when indignation is right, who should censure that which should rightly be censured and should banish him who deserves to be banished? But we will give him in return a proportion of the rice.

Then, Vasettha, those beings went to the being among them who was the handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable, and said to him: Come now, good being, be indignant at that whereat one should rightly be indignant, censure that which should rightly be censured, banish him who deserves to be banished. And we will contribute to thee a proportion of our rice.

And he consented, and did so, and they gave him a proportion of their rice.

Chosen by the whole people, Vasettha, is what is meant by Maha Sammata; so Maha Sammata (the Great Elect) was the first standing phrase to arise for such a one. Lord of the field is what is meant by Ksatriya [i.e. from *ksetra*=field]; so Ksatriya is the next expression to arise. He charms the others by the norm—by what ought to charm—is what is meant by Raja [i.e. from *ranj*=to charm or please]; so that was the third standing phrase to arise.

Thus then, Vasettha, was the origin of this social circle of the nobles, according to the ancient primordial phrases by which they are known. Their origin was from among those very beings, and no others; like unto themselves not unlike; and it took place according to the norm, not unfittingly...

Now it occurred, Vasettha, to some of those beings as follows: Evil deeds, sirs, have become manifest among us, inasmuch as stealing, censure, lying, punishment can be noticed, and banishment. Let us now put away from us evil and immoral customs. They put away (*bahenti*, Pali) immoral customs, Vasettha, that is what is meant by Brahmins, and thus was it that Brahmins became the earliest standing phrase for those who did so. They, making leaf huts in woodland spots, meditated therein...

Now certain of these beings, Vasettha, being incapable of enduring this meditation in forest leaf-huts, went down and settled on the outskirts of villages and towns, making books. When men saw this they said: These good beings, being incapable of enduring meditation in forest leaf-huts, have gone down, and settled on the outskirts of villages and towns, and there they make books. But they cannot meditate. Now, 'these meditate not', Vasettha, is what is meant by Ajjhayaka (repeaters, namely of the Vedas). This third phrase for such people came into use. At that time they were looked upon as the lowest; now they are thought the best.

Such then, Vasettha, according to the ancient, yea, primordial, expressions by which they were known, was the origin of this social circles of the Brahmins. Their origin was from just these beings (above referred to); beings like unto themselves, not unlike...

Now, Vasettha, there were some others of those beings who, adopting the married state, set on foot various trades. That they, adopting the married state, set on foot various (*vissa*, Pali) trades is, Vasettha, the meaning of *vessa* (trades-folk). So this word came into use as a standing expression for such people, The origin, Vasettha, of the social group called the Vaisyas was in accordance with this ancient, yea, primordial designation. It was from just these beings (above described), beings like unto themselves, not unlike...

Now, Vasettha, those of these beings that remained over took to hunting. But those that live on hunting, and such like trifling pursuits, is what is meant by Sudda (Sudra). [Both the readings here and the logic of the word-play are doubtful: Rhys Davids.] Thus then, according to the ancient, yea, primordial expression, is the origin of this social group called Sudda-s (Sudras). Their origin was from just those beings (above described), beings like unto themselves, not unlike.

Such then, as the Buddha wants us to understand, is the coming into being of caste-society with the Ksatriyas, Brahmins, Vaisyas and Sudras. The origin of these social classes out of the originally homogeneous community of beings is a purely natural phenomenon, or, according to the Buddhist way of putting it, due to the operation of the universal law of causation, of *pratitya-samutpada.*

However, in the same Buddhist view, there is also the other side of the same law: anything that comes into being is also destined to pass away. The veil, once lifted on the past, also reveals a future. If caste-society comes to being subject to definite conditions, because of the unstability of these conditions it is also destined to wither away. This is the revolutionary implication of the sociology of early Buddhism—an implication that inevitably follows from the view of universal flux—though it is also the severest historical limitation of the Buddha himself to have failed to visualise how exactly this caste-society is going to wither away. Still the implication is there and the Buddha is obliged to work it out. The only way he finds it possible to work it out is to talk of his *samgha*-s—the pockets of classless society created by him within the general structure of class society of his times—within which the distinction of castes does not exist, thanks to the general technique of changing the subjective attitude to reality which, as he imagines, is conducive to freedom. This is an illusion no doubt. However it is the historical limitation of the Buddha that the vision of a revolutionary transformation of society cannot, in his own thoughts, transcend the bounds of such an illusion. Thus after elaborately describing how caste society comes into being the Buddha describes as follows how it is going to pass away, though *only within the brotherhood of monks*[44]:

Again, Vasettha, a Ksatriya, . . . a Brahmin too . . . a Vaisya too . . . a Sudra too, who is self-restrained in deed, word and thought, and has followed after the practice of the seven principles which are the 'wings of wisdom', attains to complete extinction of evil in this present life.

For, Vasettha, whosoever of these four classes becomes, as a *bhiksu*, an *arhat*, who has destroyed the intoxicants, who has done that which is behoved him to do, who has laid down the burden, who has won his own salvation, who has wholly destroyed the fetter of rebirth, who through knowledge made perfect is free—he is declared chief among them, in virtue of a norm.

44. *Ib.* iv.93.

Such then is the rather tame or insipid vision of the withering away of caste-society that the Buddha can visualise. This is the destiny of the dialectical outlook being extended to the understanding of society under conditions that are historically premature for the full working out of the dialectics of social transformation. However, as we have already said, the real significance of the Buddha's sociology is not to be sought in the way in which he visualises its withering away but on his general verdict on caste-society. And this verdict is that like everything else in the universe, caste-society itself is nothing more than a passing phase. There was a time when it did not exist: it came into being only under definite causal conditions as everything in the universe comes into because of the law of *pratitya-samutpada*, and therefore because of the relentless working of the same law, it is foredoomed to pass away. In this sense early Buddhism does mean a condemnation of the norm of caste society which, according to the spokesmen of the norm itself, is nothing if it has no eternal verity with a divine sanction.

All this leads us to note an interesting point. We have already seen that the concept of the spiritual substance—the soul—is rejected in Indian philosophy from two standpoints. First, the standpoint of materialism, the plain-speaking representatives of which are the Lokayatas. Secondly, the standpoint of dialectical outlook, the most uncompromising representatives of which are the early Buddhists. We can now see that this is basically true also of the norm of caste-society. It is rejected in Indian philosophy mainly from two standpoints—that of materialism and of the dialectical outlook. The Lokayatas come out with a scathing criticism of the sheer hypocrisy and the exploitation-motivation underlying the norm of caste-society. This is done from the standpoint of outspoken materialism. From the standpoint of the dialectical outlook, however, the early Buddhists come out with the devastating judgment on caste-society: it came into being only under definite conditions and hence it is also destined to wither away.

What happens, then, when in the ideology of the contemporary Indian workingclass movement both materialism and dialectics are accepted, not of course in their naive and primitive forms as expressed by the Lokayatas and the early Buddhists, but on an incomparably higher level where they find their fulfilment in each other, forming thereby the materialist dialectics or dialectical materialism? There is only one answer to this question. Caste-society, which is only a form of class society, meets its ultimate historical destiny—the destiny of making room for classless society, towards which millions of working men and women are marching today. The Lokayatas can see the gruesome injustice on which is based the class society as they know it. But they can do nothing about it beyond exposing its injustice and hypocrisy with biting satire. The early Buddhists realise that such a society can be nothing more than a mere passing phase. But they can express only the pious desire that people should leave it behind and enter the *samgha*-s, within which the brethren are all equal. With the Indian working class today, however, dialectical materialism is essentially a manual of action. It helps them to evolve the effective technique of creating the classless society.

8. Mahayana Buddhism : An Ideological Retreat

But let us return to the history of Buddhism.

If the Buddha pronounces a devastating condemnation of private property and looks at it as the source of all evils and sufferings, private property takes its revenge posthumously as it were on the Buddha and his teachings.

We have already seen the general outlines of the new developments of Buddhism. The more it depends on the financial support of the monarchs, feudatory chiefs and wealthy merchants, the more parasitical it becomes. And the more parasitical it becomes, the more it is obliged to follow the obvious logic that he who pays the piper calls the tune.

The first casualty of the new Buddhism which announces itself as the Mahayana is the Buddha himself, the memory of whose historicity is sought to be washed away with a flood of new mythology—the theory of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or future Buddhas. Its second casualty is the atheism of the Buddha, which, though not formally rejected, is in fact substituted by the creed of a supreme god placed at the top of a mixed pantheon of smaller deities and hobgoblins. Its third casualty is the Buddha's expressed distaste for metaphysics, now replaced by a spurt of metaphysical exuberance with a growing malignancy about it. One aspect of this malignancy is already noted by us. It is the tendency to develop into an extreme form of world-denying idealism. We shall briefly note here the other aspect of this malignancy. It is the growing resistance to the dialectical outlook—a resistance that reaches its philosophical climax in the Sunya-vada of Nagarjuna.

But before we pass on to see the philosophical expression of this resistance, it is interesting to note how, in the scriptural works fabricated by the Mahayanists, is codified the rejection of the dialectical outlook in its sociological aspect.

We have just seen how early Buddhism wants to understand the origin of kingship. To us it appears as something like a theory of social contract. To the early Buddhists, however, it follows from the general law of *pratitya-samutpada*. Like everything else, kingship too comes into being because of some specific natural conditions. It is as much a product of definite causal conditions as anything else. What inevitably follows from the general formula of *pratitya-samutpada* is quite simple. Kingship, because it has a definite origin, has also a definite end.

Understandably enough, it becomes eventually impossible for Buddhism to retain such an attitude to the kings, on whose patronage the creed is increasingly dependent. The attitude to kingship has to be revised and revised in a direction that best suits the patrons of Buddhism. Accordingly, in the Mahayana scriptures, the king is viewed

as a son of god and kingship is invested with a divine sanction, Thus, in the *Suvarnaprabhasottama-sutra,* the god Brahma is brought to declare[45]:

How does a king, who is born of men, come to be called divine?
Why is the king called the son of the gods?
If a king is born in this world of mortals
How can it be that a god rules over men?
I will tell you of the origin of kings, who are born in the world of mortals,
And for what reason kings exist, and rule over every province.
By the authority of the great gods a king enters his mother's womb.
First he is ordained by gods—only then does he find an embryo,,
What though he is born or dies in the world of mortals—
Arising from the gods he is called the son of gods.
The thirty-three great gods assign the fortune of the king.
The ruler of men is created as the son of all the gods,
To put a stop to unrighteousness, to prevent evil deeds,
To establish all beings in well-doing, and to show them the way to heaven.
Whether man, or god, or fairy, or demon,
Or outcaste—he is a true king who prevents evil deeds.
Such a king is mother and father to those who do good.
He was appointed by gods to show the results of *karma.*

The Mahayana scripture just quoted is written—or, according to the pontifical expression permitted by the Mahayanists, 'came to the world'—several centuries after the Buddha. The divine origin of and divine sanction for kingship proclaimed in it are not just an ad hoc ideological grant to the great patrons of Buddhism. It is rather a symptom of the serious ideological retreat of later Buddhism—a retreat resulting from its ever-growing parasitism. In the context of our present discussion, we shall note only one aspect of this retreat, i.e. the retreat from the dialectical outlook of original Buddhism.

One expression of the tendency to flout the Buddha's view of universal flux is to reinstate the concept of soul in

45. See de Bary 185-6.

Buddhist philosophy. We are told that this is one of the issues that leads to the first split among the Buddhists. "The *Kathavatthu* begins its exposition of divergent views by a long discussion of the question about the possible reality of soul. The schools of Arya-Sammitiyas and Vatsiputriyas were inclined to interpret the doctrine of soullessness in a sense which admitted some, albeit very feeble, unity in the elements of a personality."[46]

Understandably, much of this new controversy is scripture-oriented. Not only do the contending parties try to reinterpret the words of the Buddha in their own way; there is moreover the zeal to own or disown certain statements as genuine words of the Buddha. Thus the older or orthodox Buddhists, usually called the Theravadins, accuse the Vatsiputriyas of having suppressed the scriptural passages that go against their views, while the Vatsiputriyas, in their turn, accuse the Theravadins of leaning upon passages that were not genuinely scriptural.[47] However, scriptures apart, some of the grounds mentioned by the Vatsiputriyas in defence of their view of a somewhat shadowy but permanent soul are intended to be logical. For example, they argue that the fact of memory cannot be explained without the admission of a soul—an argument which in the comparatively later period is specially advanced by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas:

> Now, if there is absolutely no soul, how is it then that the detached moments of consciousness can remember or recognise things which had been experienced a long time ago? ... If there were absolutely nothing permanent, it would mean that one consciousness had perceived the object and another one remembers it. How is it possible? In this case, things experienced by Devadatta's consciousness would be remembered by the consciousness of Yajnadatta... If there is no soul, whose is the recollection, whom does it belong to?[48]

There is moreover the evidence of the cognising agent on which the Vatsiputriyas are said to depend[49]:

46. Stcherbatsky STB 5. 47. Stcherbatsky CCB 4n & STB 33.
48. Stcherbatsky STB 57-9. 49. *Ib.* 62.

A soul must exist, because wherever there is an activity it depends on an agent. Every action depends on an agent. Thus, in the example 'Devadatta walks', there is an action of walking which depends on Devadatta, the agent. To be conscious is likewise an action. Hence the agent who cognises must also exist.

But the Vatsiputriyas apparently hesitate to revive the concept of the permanent soul in the full sense of the term: "But in our opinion, the self means that the individual is neither one of the elements, nor is it something outside the elements."[50] Moreover there is really no ground to think that such a hesitant step towards the reintroduction of the soul into Buddhist philosophy meets with any great success. What we hear of them is from others—i.e. the rival Buddhists—who are moreover keen mainly on ridiculing the Vatsiputriyas.[51]

After the Vatsiputriyas, the early Vijnana-vadins make a comparatively bolder attempt at what Stcherbatsky has described as "a disguised return from the theory of stream of thought to the doctrine of a substantial soul".[52] This is expressed as their views of *alaya-vijnana* and *tathagata-garbha*, of which the former is more philosophical, the latter frankly mythologico-metaphysical.

The concept *alaya-vijnana* means something like the 'all-conserving mind'—'a store-house, a real granary, where the seeds (*bija*) or all future ideas and the traces of all past deeds are stored up'.[53] According to Vallee Poussin, "The *alaya-vijnana* is somewhat like a soul, and we know from the Tibetan authorities that the maintainers of the Hinayana strongly objected to this new *vijnana*. It is a series of 'subliminal images'—a store of seeds that give birth to actual cognitions; it may be looked upon as a thinking entity which manifests itself in a succession of thoughts."[54]

50. *Ib.* 34. of 91 for arguments attributed to them by Yasomitra.
51. See e.g. Chattopadhyaya (ed) THBI 181-2.
52. Stcherbatsky CBN 53.
53. *Ib.* 52.
51. Vallee Poussin in ERE ix.851-2.

The concept is specially emphasised by Asvaghosa, who may be the same as the famous poet of the *Buddhacarita* and who, we are further told, "was summoned to Kabul by Katyayaniputra, the alleged composer of the 'Abhidharma in Eight Sections', in order to help him in the compilation of the Great Commentary (*Mahavibhasa*) on the text of Abhidharma", i.e. to help the colossal metaphysical activity said to have taken place in the Council convened under the patronage of king Kaniska.

But the concept of *alaya-vijnana* has a prominent place also in Vijnana-vada as expounded by Asanga. In his philosophy, it means something precariously near the Upanisadic soul from which the entire complex of subjective and objective world is supposed to emanate. As Anesaki[55] explains,

Asanga terms mind the *alaya*, i.e. the abode or *nidus* where all things, both subjective and objective, are latent, and whence they are projected and manifested. This *nidus* produces from and by itself intelligence or will, reason and five senses in succession. It is therefore called the Eighth, just like the Samkhyan *purusa*. Each of the sense-organs projects or manifests its own objects, both fine and gross. by virtue of the seed (*bija*) stored up in the *alaya;* and the world thus manifested or objectified reacts upon the Eighth (the *alaya*) through the seven subordinate mind-organs, by 'perfuming' them. The *nidus* or the source of the word, the *alaya,* acts, in this way, as that which *takes on* the impressions received from the objective world, i.e. as the *adhana*. Illusion in human life thus consists in regarding the objectification of one's own mind as a world independent of that mind which is really its source. To get rid of this fundamental illusion, we must study the true nature of our mind and its objectifications. Right knowledge of its true nature, the *dharmalaksana,* leads us to the full development of the 'seeds of enlightenment', and, as a consequence, to the absorption of the whole world into one's own self. Following, therefore, on right knowledge, this absorption, first of thought and then of objective phenomena into the inner self, i.e, the *yoga-acara,* is the necessary step to the attainment of Buddhahood.

55. Anesaki in ERE ii.62.

Much more peculiar is the concept of the *tathagata-garbha,* under the cover of which practically the old Upanisadic concept of one eternal soul as embedded in all individual souls is sought to be smuggled in by the Mahayana Buddhists. For understanding this concept, we have first to note the quaint transformation of the idea of the Tathagata in Mahayana Buddhism. In early Buddhism, Tathagata is simply an epithet of the historical Buddha and it means one who has gone beyond the sphere of worldly attachments or, more simply, one who has attained wisdom. In the mystical mythologies fabricated by the Mahayanists, however, the concept of the Tathagata is invested with an altogether new significance. It represents some kind of transcendental metaphysical reality from which all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are imagined to emanate or appear as *avatara*-s. These Buddhas and future Buddhas have their histories; but the Tathagata as such is supposed to be an eternal personality without any extinction. Though tedious-reading, we may quote here a brief passage from one of the Mahayana scriptures called the *Saddharma-pundarika* just to have an idea of the cumbrous theology of the eternal personality—of the Upanisadic soul—woven round the concept of the Tathagata. In this text, the Tathagata hmself declares[56]:

The Tathagata then, young men of good family, does what he has to do. The Tathagata who so long ago was perfectly enlightened is unlimited in the duration of life; he is everlasting. Without being extinct, the Tathagata makes a show of extinction, on behalf of those who have to be educated. And even now, young men of good family, I have not accomplished my ancient Bodhisattva-course, and the measure of my lifetime is not full. Nay, young men of good family, I shall yet have twice as many hundred thousand myriads of crores of aeons before the measure of my lifetime be full. I announce final extinction, young men of good family, though myself I do not become finally extinct. For in this way, young men of good family, I bring all creatures to maturity, lest creatures in whom goodness is not firmly rooted, who are unholy, miserable, eager of sen-

56. SBE xxi.302-4 & 306-7.

sual pleasures, blind and obscured by the film of wrong views, should, by too often seeing me, take to thinking: 'The Tathagata is staying' ... Hence, young men of good family, the Tathagata skilfully utters these words: The apparition of the Tathagatas, monks, is precious and rare, For in the course of many hundred thousand myriads of crores of aeons creatures may see a Tathagata or not see him. Therefore, and upon that ground, young men of good family, I say: The apparition of the Tathagatas, monks, is precious and rare. By being more and more convinced of the apparition of the Tathagatas being precious and rare they will feel surprised and sorry, and whilst not seeing the Tathagata they will get a longing to see him. The good roots developing from their earnest thought relating to the Tathagata will lastingly tend to their weal, benefit and happiness; in consideration of which the Tathagata announces final extinction, though he himself does not become finally extinct, on behalf of the creatures who have to be educated. Such young men of good family, is the Tathagata's manner of teaching, when the Tathagata speaks in this way, there is from his part no falsehood...

In order to set forth this subject more extensively, the Lord on that occasion uttered the following stanzas: 'An inconceivable number of thousands of crores of aeons, never to be measured, is it since I reached superior (or first) enlightenment and never ceased to teach the law. I roused many Bodhisattvas and established them in Buddha knowledge. I brought myriads of crores of beings, endless, to full ripeness in many crores of aeons. I show the place of extinction, I reveal to all beings a device to educate them, albeit I do not become extinct at the time, and in this very place continue preaching the law. There I rule myself as well as all beings—I. But men of perverted minds, in their delusion, do not see me standing there.

All this gives us some idea of the new implications acquired by the concept of Tathagata in Mahayana Buddhism. In accordance with this, it is claimed that the thoughts of Tathagata are absolutely pure or, according to the Buddhist way of putting it—without any defilement. What differentiates this thought or wisdom from the mundane thoughts of the common people—*prthagjanah*—is that the latter is contaminated by defilement. But the common people are not destined for ever to remain with such defiled thought, for the message characteristic of the Mahayana

is supposed to be the message of the emancipation of all living creatures. All living creatures have also the potentiality of outgrowing the defilement of their thoughts and thus to move towards the attainment of enlightenment or the pure uncontaminated thought characteristic of the Tathagata—an enlightenment that alone ensures salvation. But how can this be possible unless every one possesses the potentials of the Tathagata within oneself? Hence it is assumed that the Tathagata—the eternal personality or ultimate reality or god—remains dormant in every living being. As a consequence of this, everybody can take the vow of being a Bodhisattva or future Buddha, which, when attained, the Tathagata dormant in him is imagined to attain its self-realisation.

Such is the cumbrous theological course followed by the Mahayanists to reach their concept of the *tathagata-garba*, i.e. of the presence of the 'embryo of Tathagata' within everybody. The *Lankavatara-sutra*, one of the scriptural works of the Mahayanists which is commonly assumed as first foreshadowing the Vijnana-vada, declares[57]:

There is an embryo of a Tathagata, genuinely radiant and pure, endowed with the thirty-two marks, present in every living being; but like a gem covered by dirt, covered by the corporeal forms, sensations, etc., defiled by the wrong notions produced by lust, hatred and delusion; nevertheless, permanent, firm, blessed, everlasting.

Vallee-Poussin's comment[58] on this is extremely interesting, because it enables us to see clearly wherefrom this concept is borrowed, or it at least allowed to creep into Buddhism:

The compilers of the *Lankavatara* are careful to state that the dogma of the *tathagata-garbha* is not to be understood in a heretical sense, that it is not like the theory of a universal and permanent soul (*atman*), that it has been preached in order to introduce the heretics who believe in a soul into the Buddhist doctrine of soullessness (*nairatma*); that the *tathagata-garbha* really means voidness,

57. ERE ix.852. 58. *Ib.*

bhutakoti, nirvana. But is it not a strange method of converting the Vedantists, to teach them Vedantism in Buddhist garb? Granted that the true meaning of the *tathagata-garbha* is that every creature is an embryo of Tathagata, i.e. future Buddha, there may be doubt as to its obvious meaning.

All this means one thing. Under cover of some terminological reshuffling and the newfangled mythology of Mahayana, there is the surreptitious tendency of reintroducing the Upanisadic idea of the soul into Buddhism, which the Buddha himself so earnestly rejects. If the concept of the *alaya-vijnana* or 'all-conserving mind' represents this tendency more on the philosophical level, that of *tathagata-garbha* represents it with a mishmash of mythology and theology—a mishmash which, it is perhaps hoped, effectively conceals the fact that the Mahayana Buddhists are trying to renounce the old theory of universal flux and reinstating in its place a theory of permanent soul, which, with the obscurations removed, can realise itself as the world-soul or cosmic soul, the Upanisadic *brahman.*

Apparently all this is much too complicated to be readily understood by the common people. For the purpose of mass consumption, therefore, the need is felt for a more popular version of basically the same view. The Mahayana Buddhists hope to achieve this by identifying their Tathagata with god Amitabha, the lord of Sukhavati, or with god Vairocana, and all this as somehow or other imagined to be the same as the theory of soullessness of Budhhism. This represents the final theological version of the retreat from the dialectical outlook of original Buddhism, an outlook which is usually expressed as *anatma-vada* or the theory of soullessness. The theory completely passes into its opposite when it becomes the cult of a personal god. "Soullessness", Stcherbatsky[59] observes, "was later on conceived in a pantheistic sense and personified as the primeval Buddha Vairocana. The same can be maintained

59. Stcherbatsky STB 6.

with regard to its theistic conception personified as Buddha Amitabha, whose worship gave rise to the new religion."

Such are some of the features of the ideological retreat of Mahayana Buddhism. Flouting the original view of universal flux, it pleads for divine sanction—and therefore of unalterability—of kingship. It wants to re-adapt the conception of the soul, first somewhat vaguely by the Vatsiputriyas, then in the more well-defined form as the *alaya-vijnana* of the early Vijnana-vadins, and finally in their quaint metaphysico-mythological conception of *tathagata-garbha*. At the same time it completely repudiates the atheism of the Buddha and preaches the cult of a personal god identifying it mystically with soullessness as ultimate reality.

However if all these features of the ideological retreat are somewhat external—i.e. the result of trying to graft on Buddhism thoughts and ideas alien to its original spirit —Nagarjuna works for the most profound internal transformation of Buddhism, so that the very concept of change can be fully routed from the Buddhist view of reality.

The Buddha's view of universal flux, as we have seen, follows from—or at least is internally related to—his theory of universal causation or *pratitya-samutpada*. Nagarjuna realises that so long as this theory remains unaffected, no amount of grafting of external ideas on the Buddhist view can help it completely to outgrow the original emphasis on looking at everything as coming into being and passing away. Hence he works out an altogether new and highly ingenious interpretation of the theory of *pratitya-samutpada* itself.

We have already seen the main point of Nagarjuna's new interpretation of *pratitya-samutpada*, which consists mainly in adding to it a simple proposition. According to the old and original understanding of the theory, everything comes into being subject to some definite conditions. Nagarjuna retains this view in toto; but he wants only to add that a thing which comes into being as depending upon some specific condition must forfeit its claim to in-

trinsic reality. Therefore, since everything comes into being depending necessarily on some specific condition, nothing is entitled to be called real at all. The whole universe is reduced to just nothingness. Only an indescribable Absolute, transcending all change and multiplicity, remains real, In this way is finally overthrown the most prominent philosophical feature of early Buddhism—its view of universal flux—by giving a simple twist to the fundamental proposition of early Buddhism, its theory of universal causation or *pratitya-samutpada.*

9. Theory of Momentariness

Notwithstanding Nagarjuna, the view of universal flux does not die out in the Buddhist tradition. It continues to exist in a new form, now called the theory of momentariness (*ksanikatva*) and this, as further claimed, as the right implication of *pratitya-samutpada*, which Nagarjuna misinterprets. In other words, there develop two opposite interpretations of the Buddha's view of universal causation, and between the two there is all the difference between the 'metaphysical' view of pure permanence and the dialectical view of ceaseless becoming. Stcherbatsky[60] very appropriately illustrates the contrast of the two with the benedictory verses with which Nagarjuna and Santaraksita open their philosophical works.

Nagarjuna grafts his own interpretation of *pratitya-samutpada* in the customary Buddhist reverence with which he begins the *Madhyamaka-karika*. The gist of this is: "I bow down to the Buddha who proclaims the principle of *pratitya-samutpada,* according to which there is no plurality, no differentiation, no beginning and no end, no motion—neither hither nor thither." As if in answer to this, Santaraksita opens his *Tattva-samgraha* with the same customary Buddhist reverence, though with an altogether different interpretation of the principle of dependent origination. The gist of this is: "I bow down

60. Stcherbatsky BL i.145.

to the Buddha who has proclaimed the *pratitya-samutpada,* according to which everything is in ceaseless motion, and hence there is no god, no primeval matter, no substance, etc."

The principle of *pratitya-samutpada* is taken by Santaraksita to mean momentariness or *ksanikatva*—an implication which, according to him, immediately negates all the rival philosophies, inclusive of the view of the indescribable Absolute transcending all changes.

Before we pass on to discuss the theory of momentariness, it is necessary to have a clarification. Santaraksita is a Vijnana-vadin. So are Dignaga and Dharmakirti, whose new trend in Buddhist philosophy he on the whole follows. In their view, ideas and ideas alone are real, nature or the material world has no existence of its own. This means that the theory of momentariness as we come across it in their writings is related to the idealist outlook. But whatever may be the reason that leads them to be so serious about the theory of momentariness, the fact is that it is not their innovation.

Its real innovators are the Sautrantikas. They are the first to interpret the original view of universal impermanence (*anityatva*) in the form of the theory of momentariness (*ksanikatva*). These Sautrantikas are among the earlier Buddhists whom the selfstyled Mahayanists despise as Hinayanists. Of the two sects of early Buddhism that acquire philosophical prominence, one is the Sautrantika—the name of the other is Vaibhasika, whose view is called Sarvastivada. The main issue on which the two differ is apparently theological, because it is concerning the nature of the texts that are to be considered genuinely authoritative from the Buddhist standpoint. However, when we look more closely into it, we can see that behind this controversy there is also a point of genuine philosophical interest.

According to the Buddhist tradition, the canonical works first codified are the Vinaya and Sutras (Pali, *sutta*). This is the main achievement of the first council of the Bud-

dhists, convened shortly after the death of the Buddha. The Vinaya discusses the codes of conduct mainly of the monks and in the Sutras are compiled the discourses of the Buddha on various subjects, including philosophy. One important feature of these discourses is the Buddha's disapproval of excessive metaphysical speculations. Significantly among the achievements of the first council is not mentioned the Abhidharma, the characteristic feature of which is a very pronounced enthusiasm for metaphysical speculations. Apparently the monks that gather in the first council are too near the master to outgrow his resistance to metaphysics,

But this resistance is soon outgrown and the Abhidharmas come into being. At least among a section of the earlier Buddhists, the zeal for metaphysical speculations becomes so great that roughly by the first century A.D., there is a prolific growth of the Abhidharma literature, claiming scriptural status for itself. We hear of no less than seven Abhidharmas of the Sarvastivadins or Vaibhasikas, as well as an elaborate commentary on them, briefly called the *Vibhasa.*

The Sautrantikas do not accept the authenticity of the Abhidharmas and the *Vibhasa.* They claim that whatever Abhidharma or metaphysics is considered relevant by the Buddha is to be found in his discourses compiled in the Sutras. On this point, the earlier Buddhists—the socalled Hinayanists—are sharply divided. The Sautrantikas take their stand mainly on the Sutras, the Vaibhasikas on the *Vibhasa* and the Abhidharmas.

The philosophers of the little vehicle (Hinayana) were divided into two schools: on the one hand the Vaibhasikas who accepted the Abhidharma books of the Sarvastivadins (the seven Abhidharmas) as 'revealed' scriptures, and the commentary on them, *Vibhasa,* as the oldest and most authoritative 'treatise' (*sastra*); on the other hand the Sautrantikas, who considered the seven books simply as 'treatises' of human inspiration and therefore liable to error, who maintained that Buddha had not composed treatises dealing with Abhidharma or given indications for

the composition of such treatises under his authority, but had taught Abhidharma doctrines in certain Sutras (or Sutrantas). According to them, these Sutras, the *Artha-viniscaya* etc, constitute the 'basket of Abhidharma'. Hence their name Sautrantikas, the philosophers who recognise the authority of the Sautrantas alone.[61]

Behind this controversy over the nature of the authoritative texts, there is thus the question of the desirability or otherwise of excessive metaphysics. The Sautrantikas are strongly against this, and hence they take their stand on the Sutras, in which metaphysics is on the whole discouraged. Interestingly, this is also connected with the question of the dialectical outlook, for one result of the metaphysical excess of the Vaibhasikas or Sarvastivadins with which the Sautrantikas strongly dissociate themselves is the growing indifference to—and even the surreptitious surrender of—the original emphasis on universal flux, which develops among the Sarvastivadins.

One of the main tenets of Sarvastivada or the metaphysics of the Vaibhasikas is to affirm the existence of things in all the three dimensions of time—past, present and future. The common idea that Sarvastivada is thus called because it accepts the existence (*asti*) of everything (*sarva*)—both mental and extramental—is because of an unfortunate misrepresentation of the philosophy by Samkara.[62] The *Abhidharmakosa* itself describes the Sarvastivadins as those who maintain the universal existence of everything—past, present and future.[63] It is basically a view on the notion of time, which attracts a great deal of interest among the Buddhist philosophers, because the view of universal flux preached by the Buddha demands from the later Buddhist philosophers an effective handling of the notion of time. However the way in which the Sarvastivadins handle the notion is distinctly odd, because it palpably goes against the view of perpetual flux. The Sarvastivadins claim, of course, that their position is sup-

61. Vallee Poussin in ERE xi.213.
62. Samkara on *Br Su* ii.2.18.
63. *Abhidharmakosa* v.24.

ported by the words of the Buddha. But they advance also independent logical grounds for the existence of things in the past, present and future. One has ideas of things belonging to past, present and future; but how can these things be the objects of one's ideas without actually existing? Besides past actions are supposed to produce results; but no result can come from the bare nothing. Therefore past actions exist throughout the interval and for all time to come.

How do the Sarvastivadins try to reconcile all this with the view of universal flux? Presumably they have their difficulties, for we are told of no less than four different ways in which the question is sought to be answered.[64] From the Sautrantika point of view, however, the problem itself is artificially created by the Sarvastivadins, who, in their wrong enthusiasm for metaphysics or Abhidharma, are led to postulate the existence of things in three dimensions of time, and this is open violation of the original teachings of the Buddha concerning universal impermanence. This charge has the authority of Vasubandhu, who in his earlier career has a strong leaning for the Sautrantikas and becomes a Vijnana-vadin only later in life:

Vasubandhu informs us that the theory of the Sarvastivadins was an innovation of the 'exegetical literature', i.e. it was introduced by the *abhidharmika*-s, and it is not found, according to him, in the genuine Discourses of the Buddha. The school of Sautrantikas, that is to say, that school which proclaimed on its banner a return to the genuine doctrine of the Discourses, denied therefore the permanent essence of the elements and reestablished the doctrine that reality consists of momentary flashes, that the 'elements appear into life out of nonexistence and return again into nonexistence after having been existent' for a moment only.[65]

For our knowledge of the dialectical outlook in Indian philosophy, the greatest disaster is the total loss of the works of the Sautrantika philosophers. They do not survive even in Tibetan translation. Tibet is the stronghold of

64. Radhakrishnan (ed) HPEW i. 65 Stcherbatsky BL i.111.

Mahayana, where a great deal of care is taken to preserve mainly the Mahayana works. We know from them the names of some of the outstanding writers on the Sautrantika philosophy. What actually survives of their writings is at best some stray fragments as quoted by others.

In these circumstances, the sources of our information of the theory of momentariness are mainly two. First, an account given particularly by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas for refutation purposes. Their zeal for this refutation is due to the defence of mechanical materialism against the dialectical outlook. Change—coming into being and passing away—as understood by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas is nothing but the mechanical permutation and combination of the eternal atoms. Production and destruction mean nothing but the rearrangements of the preexisting parts (*atoms*) As Gotama[66] argues, "The destruction of the previous substance is inferred by the observation of the production of a new substance due to a different form of arrangement (*vyuha*) of the component parts." Vatsyayana explains:

When it is perceived that a new substance in the form of curd has been produced due to a different form of arrangement of the component parts—i.e. a 'peculiar type of conjunction' (*sammurchana*)—it is inferred that the previous substance in the form of milk has been destroyed due to the disjunction of the component parts. As for instance, when a new substance in the form of a cooking pot is produced due to a different form of arrangement of the earth-particles, it is observed that the previous substance in the form of a lump of clay has been destroyed due to the disjunction of the earth-particles. Just like the earthen cooking pot, milk and curd also have connection with the ultimate component parts, i,e. the atoms.

We shall presently see how the theory of momentariness is intended to be a rejection of such a mechanical understanding of change.

The other source of our information of the theory of momentariness is the extensive literature of the later Vijnana-vadins—particularly the writings of Dharmakirti,

66. *NS* iii.2.16.

Santaraksita and their commentators—who take up the Sautrantika view and connect it with their own idealism. It is mainly on the basis of this that modern scholars like Stcherbatsky and Mookherjee work out a systematic account of the Buddhist theory of momentariness. However two points are to be noted in this connection.

First, the Sautrantikas themselves are not idealists. They are among the opponents of idealism, decisively favouring the reality of the extramental world. If, therefore, in the view of momentariness as explained and defended by the later Vijnana-vadins, we come across anything that shows a special predilection for idealism, the presumption is that it is the innovation of the Vijnana-vadins, and does not form a feature of the theory of momentariness as originally understood. If, on the contrary, in the theory of momentariness itself there is no such special predilection, its acceptance by the later Vijnana-vadins is perhaps to be understood as similar to their enthusiasm for the *pramana*-s—an enthusiasm which, as we have already seen, is not compatible with their extreme idealism.

All this is mentioned specially to emphasise one point. It may be wrong to try to force the theory of momentariness to agree to the view of the exclusive reality of mere subjective ideas, though the fact is that in the Buddhist literature the best defence of the view of momentariness as we have it is in the writings of the later Vijnana-vadins.

Secondly, Dharmakirti and Santaraksita are highly creative philosophers. Hence we have to presume that they also add to the logical enrichment of the theory of momentariness. Still the importance of the Sautrantikas is in no way to be minimised. Rejecting the tendency of excessive metaphysical speculations (Abhidharma), they want to remain true to the words of the Buddha (Sutras), and therefore also to the Buddha's view of universal flux, which, in the more advanced philosophical atmosphere, they restate as the theory of momentariness. Admitting that creative thinkers like Dharmakirti and Santaraksita

enrich this theory, it should by no means be overlooked that the theory itself is originally worked out by the opponents of idealism and that in this theory of momentariness the dialectical outlook reaches a level of theoretical development which is hardly to be found elsewhere before Hegel.

With these preliminaries over, we now pass on to have a brief idea of the theory of momentariness.

Its starting point is a new definition of existence or of the real. The Vaibhasikas define existence as 'whatever has a character of its own.'[67] But this is easily construed by Nagarjuna to prove that nothing is real or that nothing can have any existence: everything comes into being as dependent on certain other conditions and hence nothing has a 'character of its own'. Along with the Sautrantikas, therefore, Dharmakirti rejects the Vaibhasika definition of the real and argues that the actual criterion of reality is efficiency—the capacity to fulfil some purpose. As Dharmakirti puts it, that alone is real 'which is characterised by the capacity of producing an action in respect of an object'—*arthakriya-samarthya-laksanatva*.[68] Vinitadeva explains its literal meaning[69]:

The word *artha* means here purpose (*prayojana*). The word *kriya* means fulfilment (*nispatti*). The compound expression *arthakriya* literally means an action in respect of an object, i.e, finally the fulfilment of a purpose. The expression *arthakriya-samarthya* means the capacity of producing such fulfilment of a purpose. The expression *arthakriya-samarthya-laksana* means a thing which possesses the characteristic of—i.e. is of the nature of—being capable of producing the fulfilment of a purpose. The expression *arthakriya-samarthya-laksanatva* means the general property of such a thing.

The criterion of reality is thus efficiency. That which is capable of being efficient is real. That which is incapable of being efficient is unreal. All this is attested to by everyday experience. A jar or a cloth, for example, is considered

67. Stcherbatsky BL ii.120n. 68. Dharmakirti *NB* i.14.
69. Gangopadhyaya (tr.) *VNT* 112.

real, because it is capable of fulfilling some purpose. By contrast, the hare's horn or the flower-blossoming-in-emptiness, is unreal or nonexistent, because it serves no purpose at all. Even the common expressions of daily life are based on this assumption. Thus, for example, a person, in spite of having a son, is found to remark 'I have no son', if his son does not perform the proper functions of a son. By contrast, a person even without a son, says 'I have a real son', i.e. referring to a boy that performs for him the proper functions of a son.[70]

This efficiency or the capacity of fulfilling a purpose means the capacity of producing an effect—the capacity by which a fact really perceived is distinguished from a fiction imagined. As Dharmottara[71] explains,

> We apply the term 'ultimately real' to anything that can be tested by its capacity to produce an effect... This indeed is the reason why purposive actions are realised in regard of objects directly perceived, not in regard of objects constructed by imagination. This explains the fact that an imagined object, although we can in thought realise it as something *quasi* visible, is by no means directly perceived, because no purposive action is possible upon such fancied image. A really perceived object, on the other hand, produces purposive action.

From this definition of the real is straightway argued that everything must be momentary and hence stability is only an illusion. A thing is real only in so far as it performs some function. However because one real can occupy only one spatio-temporal position, it can perform only its unique function, But what is meant by performing its unique function? It simply means the production of its specific effect. Therefore a real is real only in so far as it produces its unique effect. But what is the unique effect of the real? Its passing away or changing into the next state of its being. Therefore anything real is real only in so far as it passes away into the next state of its

70. These are ways in which Madhava *SDS* 7 and Jayanta Bhatta *NM* ii.17 explain the point. See Gangopadhyaya (tr.) *VNT* 111n.

71. Stcherbatsky BL ii.37.

being. It is thus momentary. It is ordinarily imagined, no doubt, that most of the things endure for some time, i.e. are more or less stable. A jar, for example, exists for a considerable period of time, before it disintegrates or changes into something else. But this is only an illusion. All perceptible changes are preceded by a series of imperceptible changes; the perceptible change is only the nodal point at which the quantitative accumulation of imperceptible changes results in a perceptible—and therefore qualitatively new—change.

Let us suppose that the thing A is ordinarily imagined to exist for some time—say four moments—after which it is perceived to change into B, which, after seeming to exist for some more time, changes into C—and so on. During the four moments of the seeming existence of A, let it be called A_1, A_2, A_3 and A_4. After this, occurs B. The successive moments of this process may therefore be represented as: A_1, A_2, A_3, A_4, B. Now A_4 produces B. But what produces A_4? Obviously A_3. But since A_4 and B are conspicuouly different from each other, their respective causes —namely A_3 and A_4—must be totally different from each other, in spite of the appearance to the contrary. Similarly A_2 and A_3 must be totally different from each other, and so also must be A_1 and A_2. Thus, in spite of the apparent persistence of the thing for some moments, the thing exists only for a moment, which is the unique moment of its causal efficiency. Stcherbatsky[72] puts the point as follows:

There is no exception to the rule that the capacity of being the object of a purposive action is the essential feature establishing reality. It is a feature conterminous with existence. But a thing cannot be the object of a purposive action and cannot be efficient otherwise than by its last moment. Its former moments cannot overlap the moment of efficiency in order to produce the effect, still less can its future moments produce the preceding effect. We maintain, says Kamalasila, that an object can produce something only when it has reached the last moment of its

72. *Ib.* i.81-2.

existence (which is also its unique real moment), its other moments are non-efficient. When a seed is turned into a sprout, this is done by the last moment of the seed, not by those moments when it lay placidly in the granary. One might object that all the preceding moments of the seed are the indirect causes of the sprout. But this is impossible, because if the seed would not change every moment, its nature would be to endure and never to change. If it is said that the moment of the sprout is produced by a 'totality' of causes and conditions, the same applies to every moment, since every moment has its own totality of causes and conditions owing to which it exists. 'This our moment (i.e. the moment which we consider to be real) is the moment when an action (i.e. the run of uniform moments) is finished.' But an action in this sense is never finished, every moment is necessarily followed by a next moment. The break in that motion which constitutes the essence of reality is nothing but the appearance of an outstanding or dissimilar moment (*vijatiya-ksana-utpada*). It is outstanding for our practical requirements, because it is natural for us to disregard the uninterrupted change of moments and to take notice of it only when it becomes a new quality, i.e. sufficient to impress a new attitude on our behaviour or on our thought. The identity of the foregoing moments in the existence of a thing consists simply in disregarding their difference. The break in this identity is not a break in their motion, it always is something imagined, it is an integration of moments whose difference we are not able to notice. 'The essence of reality is motion (*cala-bhava-svarupa*)', says Santaraksita.

Dharmakirti formulates the view in terminologies of logic. The fact of universal flux is deduced analytically from the conception of existence itself. "Existence, real existence, means efficiency, and efficiency means change. What is absolutely changeless is also absolutely unefficient; what is also absolutely unefficient does not exist... Motionless and unexistent are convertible terms, since there is no other means to prove one's existence than to produce some effect."[73]

In Indian terminology, an 'analytical deduction' is called *svabhavanumana*, and 'existential identity' is called *tadatmya*. The former is illustrated by the judgments

73. *Ib.* i.89.

'existence means efficiency' and 'efficiency means change'. As examples of existential identify, Dharmakirti[74] mentions the judgments: 'whatsoever has an origin is always changing', 'whatsoever is produced by causes is impermanent', 'whatsoever is variable in dependence on a variation of its causes is subject to momentary change', 'whatsoever is produced by a conscious effect is impermanent'. "All these characteristics, although they have a different extension, are called *existentially identical*, because they may without contradiction be applied to one and the same reality."[75]

In the writings of Santaraksita[76] and Kamalasila we come across a defence of the theory of momentariness based on an analysis of the concept of perishability. Even the staunch opponents of momentariness, the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, admit that the things that come into being—i.e. the things that are produced—are perishable. In their terminology, these are called *krtaka*-s or products. Apart from these, they want to admit another class of reals—called *akrtaka*-s—meaning the nonproducts or imperishables. The latter include god, *akasa*, etc. However, argue Santaraksita and Kamalasila, these "are mere fictions of imagination and do not exist as objective realities, as the connotation of reality is causal efficiency (*arthakriyakaritva*) and no causal efficiency is predicable of them."[77] As Santaraksita[78] puts it,

If *akasa*, time and such things are existent, then, being so, they cannot escape from being momentary—just like the created things... These things, *akasa*, time, God and the rest are held by you to be existent. These could never have an existence if they were devoid of momentariness, because permanent things cannot have any fruitful activity, either successively or simultaneously, therefore they are held to be non-existent. Effects are delayed on account of the nonproximity of the cause. If the efficient cause were there, to what would that delay be due?

74. Dharmakirti *NB* iii.12,13 & 15. See Stcherbatsky BL i.90-1.
75. Stcherbatsky BL i.91.
76. Santaraksita *TS* 350ff.
77. Mookherjee BPUF 5.
78. Santaraksita *TS* 391-5.

Explains Kamalasila,[79]

It is not by their own wish that the effects come into existence or not come into existence; in fact, their *being* and *not being* depend upon the presence or absence of the cause. Under the circumstances, if the thing in its permanent form were always there, as the cause of all things—then how is it that effects are not produced at once, being dependent as they are upon the mere presence of the said cause? And why should they appear successively—one after the other? So that even the subsequent effect should come into existence beforehand, because its cause would be there in its untrammelled form—just like the effect that the opponent has in view.

Santaraksita and Kamalasila go into minute details of this polemic against the possible admission of the existence of the class of reals alleged to be *akrtaka*-s or unproduced. Rejecting the reality of these, they concentrate on proving that the produced or perishable things, which alone are real, must be viewed as momentary.

How, they ask, is the perishability of these perishable things related to their intrinsic essence? Is this perishability external to the intrinsic nature of the things or does it constitute their intrinsic nature? In the first alternative—i.e. if perishability is viewed as external or alien to the intrinsic nature of the thing—the thing becomes intrinsically imperishable. As such there is no explanation of the thing perishing. Therefore the only explanation of the perishing of the things can be based on the admission that perishability belongs to their intrinsic nature. On this admission, however, nothing can be real without perishing. The very moment of the existence of a thing is immediately followed by the moment of its annihilation. The very moment of the coming into being of a thing flows into the moment of its ceasing to be or of its passing away. This means that the thing is momentary. Mookherjee[80] sums up the argument:

Now, if a thing is perishable by its very nature and cons-

79. Kamalasila *panjika* on *TS* 395. 80. Mookherjee BPUF 1.

titution, it will perish in the very next moment of its birth independently of the service of an external agent. If however it is not constitutionally perishable, it must be imperishable and no amount of external force, that may be brought to bear upon it, can make it cease to exist, as a thing cannot forfeit its own nature and assume that of another, and yet continue to remain the same entity as before. And there is no medium between the momentary and non-momentary... To suppose, therefore, that a thing may be perishable by its nature and constitution and yet must be dependent upon an external agent to bring about its destruction, involves a necessary absurdity.

The main point of this argument for momentariness is that the perishing of the perishable things—which, incidentally, are the only real things—cannot be accounted for by any external agent acting on the things from outside. But this denial of the external agent does not mean the denial of a definite cause for the destruction of the thing. What is argued instead is that this cause exists *in* the things and constitutes their very nature.

Argues Santaraksita:

When a certain thing does not need any other cause for the bringing about of a certain condition, that condition should be regarded as inherently attaching to it. Because out of its own causes that thing appears in that condition; just as the causal conditions are independently, by themselves, capable of producing their effect. And all the things that are produced are independent of all else in the matter of their destruction. ...All produced things are always and everywhere independent in regard to their destruction; as in this matter all causes of destruction are entirely inefficacious.[81]

It is not true to assert: 'the thing is destroyed by another thing named Destruction'...[82]

If this is not accepted—if, in other words, it is claimed that the perishability of a perishable thing is due to something other than the inherent nature of the thing or to something exernal to it—there result all sorts of difficulties and absurdities. Mookherjee[83] sums these up:

81. Santaraksita *TS* 352-5, 357.
82. *Ib.* 362.
83. Mookherjee BPUF 2-3.

The theory of an external, destructive agent, on the other hand gives rise to logical complications. The destructive agent, requisitioned for the destruction of an entity, can be posited if it has any effect on the thing to be destroyed; but this effect will transpire to be illusory on examination. Well, what can be the nature of this effect? Is it the production of another entity or non-existence of the previous entity? On the former alternative, a destructive agent has no useful function, as a thing is brought into existence by its own proper cause, which is the immediate, antecedent entity. And to say that the cause of a succeeding event is the cause of the destruction of the previous entity is to say that destruction is self-caused and spontaneous, which is our position. The second alternative that the destructive agent causes non-existence of the previous entity is equally untenable, as only an entity can be produced and non-existence being produced will be an entity—which is absurd. And if this supposed non-existence is identical with the thing that is produced, the cause of destruction as distinct from the previous entity need not be postulated. Moreover, the destructive agent must be supposed to produce an effect on the thing to be destroyed. And is this effect something distinct from the thing on which it is produced or not distinct? If distinct, it will not destroy the thing, as there is no relation between the two. On the latter alternative, it is useless as nothing new is produced.

Perishability thus belongs to the inherent nature of things; it is not due to any external factor acting on them. Hence the expression perishability *of* a thing is only a use of perverse language, like the expression 'the body of a statue'. The statue is the body, and the expression does not mean that the body is something different from the statue and possessed by it. Similarly perishability *is* the thing; it is not anything different from the thing and added to the thing as it were.

However the most obvious objection to such a view is that all sorts of cases are empirically known where something is destroyed by some external cause acting on it. The jar is destroyed by the stroke of a hammer; the lump of clay is destroyed by the potter when he converts it into a jar. How, in the face of such indisputable observations,

can it be claimed that destruction or annihilation belongs to the intrinsic nature of things?

Santaraksita answers that in the theory of momentariness, destruction or annihilation or perishability is not at all understood in the sense in which a jar is destroyed by a stroke of hammer. This is destruction in the sense of empirical annihilation—*pradhamsana.* What is sought to be explained by the theory of momentariness is *vinasa* or *vinasvaratva,* meaning evanescence in a much deeper sense. It is "an imperceptible, infinitely graduated, constant deterioration or impermanence which is the very essence of reality"—the perishability of the jar so to say by time. "Santaraksita therefore says, 'reality itself is called annihilation, namely that ultimate reality which has the duration of a moment'. It is not produced by a cause like the stroke of a hammer; it arises by itself, since it belongs to the essence of reality, reality is impermanent."[84]

The formulation of the theory of Instantaneous Being as laid down by Santaraksita in the dictum that 'the momentary thing represents its own annihilation' is remarkable in the highest degree... Nobody will deny that when a jar is broken to pieces by a stroke of the hammer it has ceased to exist. But beyond this obvious empirical change there is, as stated above, another, never beginning and never stopping, infinitely graduated, constant change, a running transcendental ultimate reality. The creation of the jar out of a lump of clay and its change into potsherds are but new qualities, i.e. outstanding moments in this uninterrupted change. There is nothing perdurable, no static element in this process. An everlasting substantial matter is declared to be pure imagination, just as an everlasting substantial soul. There is, therefore, as Santaraksita says, in every next moment not the slightest bit left of what has been existent in the former moment. The moments are necessarily discrete; every moment, i.e. every momentary thing is annihilated as soon as it appears, because it does not survive in the next moment. In this sense everything represents its own annihilation. If something of the preceding moment would survive in the next

84. Stcherbatsky BL i.95.

moment, this would mean eternity, because it would survive in the third and following moments just in the same way as it did survive in the second ...

This kind of annihilation, transcendental annihilation, is not produced by occurrent causes. Since existence itself is constant annihilation, it would go on existing, i.e. being annihilated and changing, without needing in every case any cause of annihilation. The elements of existence are automatically evanescent, they do not want any additional circumstance in order to produce that change which is going on always and by itself.

Just as the totality of causes and conditions of every event is necessarily followed by that event, because the totality is present, nothing else is needed, the totality is the event itself, just so everything is evanescent by its nature, no other cause of annihilation or change is needed. Reality has been characterised as efficiency; it can also be characterised as evanescence or annihilation.[85]

Lest all this should give us a nihilistic suggestion, it is necessary to add that though, according to the theory of momentariness, the annihilation or destruction of the preceding moment is viewed as total or complete, its result is not sheer nothingness or void. The annihilation is total, because nothing of the previous moment survives in the succeeding moment. Yet this process of perpetual change does not result in nothingness or the void, because perishing means the replacement of something by something altogether different—the replacement of the old by the new, the new having nothing in common with the old. Destruction is thus not mere death; on its other side there is also the birth of the new. Death and birth are thus the two ways of looking at the same process: from the point of view of what perishes, it is death; from the point of view of that which replaces it, it is birth. When the quantitative accumulation of this imperceptible, infinitely graduated process of death and birth assumes a qualitative dimension—when, in other words, a thing is replaced by something conspicuously different from itself—people say that a thing is destroyed by a particular cause. Really

85. *Ib.* i.95-6.

speaking, however, this is only a more complex case of a 'causation of a positive entity' and not a case of 'causation of destruction'. Ruhula Sankrityayana[86] puts the point very clearly. When the cause is considered more valuable than the effect, people say that something is destroyed. When, however, the effect is considered more valuable than the cause, people say that something is produced. But the two are only the two ways of describing the same situation, just as the burning of the wood can alternatively be described as the destruction of the tree or the production of charcoal. What actually takes place is the replacement of something by something else in a series of ceaselessly changing things.

From the times of Gotama's *Nyaya-sutra,* the Nyaya-Vaisesikas do their best to refute the theory of momentariness. Before passing on to consider their most typical argument against the theory, we may note an interesting point. While representing the theory of momentariness as the *purvapaksa,* the main argument mentioned for it by Vatsyayana is not to be found in the writings of the later Vijnana-vadins like Dharmakirti and Santaraksita. Hence we are left to presume that this argument could have been taken by Vatsyayana from some Sautrantika text, now lost to us. The argument, in brief, is that momentariness of objects is proved by the instance of the body, which goes on changing every moment. As Vatsyayana[87] puts it,

How is it known that all objects are momentary? Because of the observation of continuous growth and decay in the body and the like. There goes on a continuous process of growth and decay in the body, as the essentials of the food taken—being extracted through the process of digestion—are assimilated in the form of blood or the like. From continuous growth it is inferred that different bodies are produced and from continuous decay it is inferred that different bodies are destroyed. Thus, only from a specific change in the component of the body can its growth in

86. Rahula Sankrityayana *Darsana-digdarsana* (Hindi) 762.
87. Vatsyayana on *NS* iii.2.10.

the future time be understood. This momentariness, which is thus proved to be the property of a specific object, namely the body, is to be understood to be so in the case of each and every object.

Following Gotama, Vatsyayana wants to reject the argument as an illicit generalisation. To argue that since the body is perpetually changing, everything else—like a piece of stone or crystal—also must be momentary, is like arguing that 'the pungent taste of an *akanda* fruit indicates that the taste of each and every substance is pungent'.[88] The fact on the contrary is that the piece of the crystal, for example, is definitely known as a permanent substance. In view of this definitely known fact, it is absurd to claim that new pieces of crystal appear every moment, one after another, or in other words that the crystal too is momentary.

But how, it will be asked, is it so definitely known that the piece of crystal is not momentary? How is it definitely known that in the things like the crystal, there is no perpetual replacement of one member in a series by another? The most decisive proof, as it is argued by the Nyaya-Vaisesikas, is the fact of re-cognition or *pratyabhijna*. When I look again at the same crystal after a lapse of time, I recognise it to be the same crystal as seen before. Had the crystal been replaced by a new one, this fact of recognition would have been impossible. So also are other cases. "The seed, for instance, perceived once in some place may be perceived on another occasion in some other place and be recognised as: 'This is the same seed as was previously perceived.' Such re-cognition proves that the seed is a permanent object and hence the inference seeking to prove momentariness would be contradicted by perception."[89]

Since this is supposed to be by far the most decisive argument against the theory of momentariness, we may

88. *Ib.* iii.2.11.
89. Gangopadhyaya NP iii.119.

quote Stcherbatsky[90] again to see how the upholders of the theory answer it:

The Buddhist answers. Let us (for the sake of argument) admit that the momentary character of all existence is not reflected directly in our cognition (but does duration fare any better? is duration reflected directly?). Yes, it is! says the Realist. There is a consecrated fact, that fact of Re-cognition which proves the stability and duration of things; it is a cognition of the pattern: 'this is the same crystal gem (which I have seen before).' This judgment, answers the Buddhist, does not at all prove the stability and duration of the crystal, it does not prove that its former condition is quite the same as its present condition. And if this is not proved, nothing lies in the way of our assuming that there is an imperceptible uninterrupted process of change even in the crystal gem. It will then be not an enduring substance, but a change of momentary existencies following one another. Indeed, the judgment 'this is the same crystal' is an illicit association of two utterly heterogeneous elements which have nothing in common. The element *this* refers to the present, to a sensation and to a real object. The element *that* refers to the past, to something surviving exclusively in imagination and memory. They are as distinct as heat and cold. Their unity cannot be created even by the almighty god Indra! If such things could be identical, there is no reason why the whole universe should not be composed of identical things. Memory whose function is limited to the past cannot grasp the present moment, nor can sensation, whose function is limited to the present, apprehend the past. When there is a discrepancy in the causes, the effect cannot be identical, or else the result would be produced not by the causes, but at haphazard. Memory and sensation have each their respective field of action and their own result, they cannot mix up so as to work the one in the field of the other. Recognition is not to be distinguished from memory, and memory is produced by thought construction; it is not a direct reflex of reality. Therefore the contention of the Realist that recognition proves duration betrays only his desire that it should be so (*manorathamatram*).

Thus, in short, re-cognition is not a form of valid knowledge at all. Its evidence cannot disprove what is other-

90. Stcherbatsky BL i.88-9.

wise proved by a number of valid evidences. Still the psychological phenomenon referred to as re-cognition is not without an interest of its own. Though everything is momentary, we have sometimes the sense of perceiving something already perceived before. How is such a sense to be accounted for?

To the upholders of the theory of momentariness, the question is not a new one and the Buddha himself answered it with his characteristic simplicity. The sense of seeing stability in eternal becoming is only an illusion. It is like the illusion of seeing a permanent flame, when the fact is that in the flame at every moment new fire is replacing the old. Re-cognition of a crystal as the same that is perceived in the past is nothing more than an instance of the same illusion. But this illusion cannot dictate terms to reality, i.e. prove permanence where there is only momentariness.

Chapter 10

THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM

1. Preliminary Remarks

From the point of view of our present philosophical requirements, the discussion of Indian philosophy would be incomplete without a survey of another prominent feature of it. This feature is not indicative of the success of our philosophers but rather of their failure. It is the failure to arrive at a positive understanding of freedom. At the same time, it is here where the Indian philosophers really fail that their imaginary achievement is most frequently eulogised and given the widest publicity.

The result is worse than a theoretical muddle. It creates an illusion and the illusion casts a spell on popular consciousness. This spell has to be broken. But it cannot be broken with mere indifference and contempt, no more than a morbid condition can be overcome only by despising it. We have to understand this failure of our traditional philosophers, which we can do in terms of the real factors really setting limits to their mental horizon. Only thus can we outgrow their failure and move towards a positive conception of freedom adequate for our present requirements.

2. Freedom in Indian Philosophy

Indian philosophy, runs the usual platitude, is more than a mere intellectual curiosity. Even *jnana* or knowledge is viewed here as about all a *marga* or path. This means that theoretical discipline is considered relevant only in so far as it is consciously cultivated as a way of moving

towards the highest human ideal or *nihsreyasa*, literally 'that more desirable than which there is nothing else'. This ideal is usually understood as *mukti* or freedom. Other words referring to freedom are *moksa, apavarga, nirvana, kaivalya, nirodha.* Apart from a small minority of them, the Indian philosophers claim that their philosophical activities are intended to explore the path to this freedom. Indian philosophy is freedom-intoxicated as it were. Every fibre of it is a protest against bondage.

Not that there is nothing in all this. With the exception of the early Mimamsakas and the Lokayatas, practically all the Indian philosophers find it peculiarly obligatory to raise the question of freedom and answer it. They even want to show the basic relevance of their views as means of attaining it. A philosophical work usually opens with the declaration that what is discussed in it promises the summum bonum in the sense of freedom or *mukti*. The earnestness of our philosophers seeking freedom need not be doubted. But this is not to be taken as anything more than their intention. Our philosophers are apparently aware of what of they are looking for. As for actually finding it out in the form of a positive and adequate conception of freedom, something more is evidently needed than scholastic skill, combined though it may be with a very warm heart. We shall have to see what this something is and how it is historically denied to our traditional philosophers.

3. Freedom and Indian Idealism

Among the Indian philosophers only the outspoken idealists succeed in working out a coherent conception of freedom, i.e. a conception in full conformity with their stand in epistemology and ontology. This stand being basically negative—interested in undermining the reality of nature instead of understanding and thereby mastering it—their view of freedom also turns out to be essentially negative.

Shorn of the terminological niceties, it means something like the liberation from an unreal bondage—an

escape of the spirit from the involvement in matter—though this involvement, like matter itself, is something non-existing. Only a sham sense of involvement is there, and this being the product of ignorance is dispelled by knowledge. Lest this sounds enigmatic, the idealists sometimes want to explain their view of freedom on the analogy of waking up from a prolonged dream—a nightmare.

From their own standpoint, however, even this analogy is not to be taken literally. They want us to understand waking experience itself on the model of dream experience, and hence for them even 'waking up' has at best some tentative significance. The fact is that the extreme negativism of the idealist conception of freedom defies any description in normal language. If it has anything to fall back upon, that is at best some kind of mysticism.

Admitting such a conception of freedom, all propositions of changing the actual world lose significance. So also all propositions of changing society in which men toil or do not toil—remain basically divided into the working class and the leisured class. All this is ultimately reduced to metaphysical meaninglessness. For the idealists, the only meaning that these may have is restricted to the standpoint of the purely tentative truth of empirical existence—to *samvrti* or *vyavaharika satya*—which is really speaking untruth and unreality. From this restricted standpoint, lofty things are indeed often said by our idealist philosophers. Some of the popular preachers of the Advaita Vedanta write very moving verses. But the Mahayana idealists excel all. They talk of love and compassion—of *maitri* and *karuna*—more passionately than anybody else ever does in Indian philosophy. They take the vow of working for the emancipation of all living things in the world, inclusive of the meanest worms and insects. But this vow is for them only a preparation for the attainment of the highest wisdom. This wisdom, once reached, resuls in the realisation that the entire world—with everything living in it—is a world of sheer appearance and no reality. The promise of emancipating the

living beings ends in the annihilation of the very sense of the existence of living beings with their real sufferings in the real world. The world exists only for the deluded fools for whom the life of practical activities has significance. Without the complete negation of the standpoint of practical life, there is no realisation of the ultimate truth and therefore no attainment of real freedom. The creation of a better world has thus meaning only within the limits of an illusion. With the removal of this illusion, one is left with no world to improve upon.

Thus, instead of trying to intervene in the affairs of the material world, what makes real sense for the idealist is to change the subjective attitude as such. But this does not mean any new orientation of the subject to the object, because the object exists nowhere and in no time. Freedom is supposed to mean the induction of some kind of total introversion where the subject is left with its bare subjectivity. Strictly speaking, there is not even the freedom *for* the subject; the subject itself *is* freedom.

The Vedantic way of putting this is that one who knows *brahman* becomes *brahman*. It is also supposed to be becoming a pure witness or *saksi* which is of course witnessing nothing, for at this stage the witness apart there remains nothing to be witnessed. It is also supposed to be the bliss of pure realisation in which the realisation apart there remains nothing to be realised. As a modern admirer of Advaita Vedanta puts it, "the realisation of this felicity is thus the accomplishment of the accomplished, the lifting of the veil that conceals this realised essence from view".[1] But even this metaphor is not to be taken seriously beyond a certain limit: the veil is not there, it is only a product of perverse imagination. The talk of lifting it is a mundane way of referring to the indescribable metaphysical illumination, which stands for the negation of everything mundane. There are also other mundane ways in which the Advaita Vedantists explain their concep-

1. Maitra 236.

tion of freedom: it is the realisation of the realised and the rejection of the rejected:

Consider for example the case of the person who in an excited state misses the necklace which is on his own neck. What is his feeling when he learns the truth? There is only a sense of re-realisation, of realisation of the realised, or possession of that which was never lost possession of. Consider again the case of the man who mistakes a garland of flowers for a snake. What is his feeling when he recovers from the illusion? There is only a sense of re-rejection, of rejection of the already rejected, of cancellation of the cancelled, of negation of what is not. So is it also the case of *Moksa* which consists in the realisation of the Absolute. The Absolute is self-accomplished from all eternity, and the desire to realise the Absolute is prompted only by a temporary illusion that it is unrealised. So too is it with regard to the cancellation of the empirical world. The world as mere illusory stuff is cancelled of itself, and the cancellation of it in *Moksa* is the cancellation of the cancelled, the rejection of what is rejected already.[2]

This way of taking the question of freedom to the dizzy metaphysical height where it is supposed to be identified with the bliss of pure being easily passes into its opposite and comes to stand for the ecstasy of pure nothing. This is in fact the mode in which the Mahayana Buddhists prefer to put the same ideal. According to them, freedom or *nirvana* is only another term for *sunyata*—nothingness or emptiness—which is also mystically identified with the indescribable absolute called *tathata* or 'thatness'. Hegel notes this dialectical unity of pure being and pure nothing. As he puts it, "But this mere Being, as it is mere abstraction, is therefore the absolutely negative: which, in a similarly immediate aspect, is just Nothing . . . The Nothing which the Buddhists make the universal principle, as well as the final aim and goal of everything, is the same abstraction."[3] The result is, as Hegel adds, "instead of absolute plenitude, we have absolute emptiness. The same stricture is applicable to those who define God to be mere Being; a definition not a whit better than that of the Bud-

2. *Ib.* 237. 3. Hegel 161.

dhists, who make God to be Nought, and who from that principle draw the further conclusion that self-annihilation is the means by which man becomes God.'[4]

As is only to be expected the Mahayana Buddhists—representing as they do basically the same metaphysical position as that of the Advaita Vedantists—work out the same negative conception of freedom, often using the same analogies as are found in the Advaita literature. Thus Candrakirti, explaining the conception of freedom from the standpoint of *Sunyavada*, says:

Thus it should be realised that nothing is really suppressed in *nirvana*, and nothing is really annihilated. *Nirvana* consists merely in the suppression of absolutely all the false constructions of our imagination... In the Absolute, i.e. in that principle which is final *nirvana* without any residue (of phenomenal life altogether), all elements of existence have vanished, because all of them—whether they be called defilers (*klesa*), or the creative power of life (*karma*), or individual existences (*janma*), or groups of elements—they have all totally vanished... Now, these elements which do not exist there, in the Absolute, they really do not exist at all; they are like that kind of terror which is experienced when, in the dark, a rope is mistaken for a snake and which dissipates as soon as a light is brought in. These elements of our life, called illusion and desire, their creative force and the consequent individual lives, have no real existence in the absolute sense, even at any time in the phenomenal condition of life. Indeed the rope which in the dark has been mistaken for the serpent, is not really in itself a serpent, since it is not apprehended by sight and touch, whether in the light or in the darkness, as a real serpent would necessarily be.

How is it then that it is called phenomenal reality?

We answer. Obsessed by the unreal devil of their 'Ego' and their 'Mine', the obtuse men and common worldlings imagine that they really perceive separate entities which in reality do not exist, just as the ophthalmic sees before himself hair, mosquitoes and other objects which never did exist... Indeed,

'A man, suspecting he has taken poison,

4. *Ib.* 163.

Faints even when there is no poison in his stomach.
Swayed by the care of Ego and of Mine,
Eternally he comes and dies,
Without real knowledge about his Ego.'

Therefore it should be known that nothing is suppressed in *nirvana* and nothing annihilated. The essence of *nirvana* consists merely in the extinction of all constructions of our productive imagination[5].

In the *Madhyanta-vibhanga* attributed to Maitreyanatha, the Yogacara conception of freedom is declared as:

"Extinct illusion means Salvation".[6]

Commenting on this, Vasubandhu and Sthiramati try to establish that they have some basic difference with the Sunyavadins, though for this purpose they at best succeed in claiming that the illusion—from which salvation is sought—is after all a fact, though of course its facthood is not to be taken with a great deal of metaphysical seriousness. Says Sthiramati,

It follows by implication that as long as this transcendental illusion is not extinct, bondage will prevail. 'Otherwise', says Vasubandhu, 'there will be neither any bondage nor any final deliverance.' We would be rightly accused of denying both the impurity of phenomenalisation or purity or sanctification of reality.

But if it is so—if the bifurcation of reality into one part grasping the other is not ultimately real—how are we to explain that all living beings beginning from brutes up to the higher classes of gods perceive the world in apparent division? However, if this division would represent absolute reality, in this case the impurity and oppression of phenomenal life would last eternally. There consequently never would be any *nirvana!*

And likewise on the other hand if we admit no transcendental illusion at all, there could be no phenomenal wretchedness; absolute purity and bliss should be existent in all eternality. In both these cases the struggle for Final Deliverance would be senseless.

Consequently it must be necessarily admitted (what is stated by Maitreyanatha)—

'The universal creator of the world-illusion exists,

5. Stcherbatsky CBN 290-4. 6. Stcherbatsky (tr) *MV* 80.

But he himself does not contain any division
(Of one part of reality grasping the other)'.[7]

What then is the main point of all this? It is that the world is after all an illusion. And freedom means the absolute extinction of this illusion. This is the essence of the metaphysical monstrosity which all the idealists proclaim as the right understanding of freedom. Their ways of putting and propagating it may be awesome, sometimes even emotionally surcharged. But the actual implications of what they say are fearfully bleak. There remains nothing to be done about the world, except to cultivate a philosophical contempt for it as the product of perverse imagination.

This professed indifference to the world has for the other side the pleading for its passive acceptance. For the real men and women toiling in real society only to fatten a leisured minority, the whole thing is an apology for the status quo and therefore for bondage—the slavery and serfdom of the *varnasrama* society. The political custodians of the *varnasrama* norm—the Indian law-givers—can easily see the social utility of such a conception of freedom and they boost it, hoping thereby to make the masses the unresisting victims of despotism and deprivation. Without being metaphysicians themselves they proclaim the idealist view of freedom, though mainly in its Upanisadic or Vedantic form. As Manu puts it,

Of the virtuous actions recommended, which one is declared more efficacious than the rest for securing supreme human happiness? The knowledge of the soul is declared to be the most efficacious of them all, for it is the foremost of the branches of study and by it is guaranteed immortality... He who does everything for the soul—sees the soul in every being and all beings in the soul—becomes supremely powerful.[8]

4. Freedom and the Opponents of Idealism

That extreme idealism should yield an utterly negative view of freedom is easily understood. Also understood

7. *Ib.* 80-1.
8. Manu xii.84-5 & 91. Cf also vi.29; vi.82-4; xii.118-25.

why the law-givers should take special care to boost it: its spell on popular consciousness helps to keep the masses in bondage. What is not easily understood, however, is another peculiarity of Indian philosophy, viz the virtual autonomy in it of the same conception of freedom.

Idealism is by no means the only trend in Indian philosophical tradition. That which makes it so significant is the active confrontation of idealism with its antithesis. In the course of their struggle with idealism, its opponents work out a number of positions that have distinct theoretical significance for the controversies going on even today. They make a splendid effort to defend the reality of the material world and the normal ways of knowing it. The insight into nature developed by some of them, judged in their historical context, is often remarkable.

In view of all this, is it not natural to expect a different—and basically positive—view of freedom particularly from those that contest idealism most earnestly?

But the fact is that we do not get it. Even those that are most sharply opposed to idealism do not move towards a positive view of freedom. As against idealism the really worthwhile positions developed by them are positions in epistemology and ontology. But the storm-clouds of their controversies with the idealists over these problems do not touch the more matter of fact questions concerning what is to be done and whither to move.

This would not have appeared so very strange had they been really indifferent to the problem of freedom. With their tools of investigating it still historically immature they could have as well been indifferent to it. But they do not give us such an impression. In the comparatively later period in particular[9] most of the prominent opponents of idealism want to be as serious about the problem of freedom as their idealist rivals. What amazes us however is that this seriousness seems to lead them only to

9. It appears that the tendency becomes prominent from the Gupta period to which Isvarakrsna and Vatsyayana belong.

one goal. It is basically the same conception of freedom that directly follows from the idealist outlook. Salvation, they think, consists essentially in the purity of the knowledge of the soul.

This naturally results in all sorts of gross anomalies which are anomalies between the general structure of their world-outlook and an essentially alien view of freedom somehow or other grafted on it. In so far as this view of freedom is seriously taken, the basic theoretical integrity of these philosophies is often seriously threatened. Strangely enough, even the advanced and sophisticated opponents of idealism of later times seem deliberately to overlook the threat. Reckless as it were to the safety of their philosophical fundamentals, they appear to run after this will-o'-the-wisp—this starkly negative conception of freedom—and get lost in the mire of inconsistencies.

What we are referring to is not a stray incident in the history of Indian philosophy. With the only exception of the Lokayatas, the same tendency resulting in the same crisis is found repeated like a fixed pattern. That makes the crisis so serious.

We have first to see this in some details. For this purpose we propose to examine the view of freedom in the Nyaya-Vaisesika, Samkhya and Mimamsa philosophies.

5. The Nyaya-Vaisesika Conception of Freedom

What has become the standard Vaisesika conception of freedom,[10] according to a famous formulation of Sridhara, is the total annihilation of the nine specific qualities of the soul—*navanamatmavisesagunanam atyantocchedah moksa.* These nine specific qualities are: consciousness

10. VS i.1.2 defines *dharma* as *yato'bhyudayanihsreyasasiddhih sa dharma.* The interesting ambiguity about it is not to be overlooked. It is ordinarily interpreted to mean: "*dharma* is that which leads to the attainment of wordly prosperity (*abhyudaya*) as well as liberation (*nihsreyasa*)." But it is grammatically permissible to interpret the *sutra* to mean: "*dharma* is that which leads to the attainment of the summum bonum (*nihsreyasa*) in the form of wordly prosperity (*abhyudaya*)." The second meaning seems to be more in conformity

(or knowledge), pleasure, suffering, desire, aversion, motivation, righteousness, unrighteousness and 'predisposition due to past actions' (*samskara*). With the total destruction of all these, the soul is supposed to attain liberation. But the question is: What is left as the soul when all its specific qualities are annihilated? What, in other words, is the condition of the soul in liberation? There is only one answer. The soul becomes just an inert entity—without consciousness or any other physical quality—and hence indistinguishable from the patently material things, like a lump of clay or stone. This is the main point of the criticism of the Vaisesika view of freedom in traditional Indian philosophy, and against which the Vaisesikas defend themselves. They claim that this state of liberation is somehow or other also characterised by a kind of transcendental felicity.

Hence it is a state of freedom not only from pleasures and pains but also from intelligence or consciousness, a state therefore of unconsciousness or absolute cessation of all experience in the self. It is therefore not even a state of self-knowledge, though according to the Vaisesikas it is *produced by* self-knowledge and the accomplishment of the unconditional duties. The Vaisesikas contend that though it is a state of negation of all experience yet it is a state of felicity i.e. of the felicity or satisfaction that belongs by nature to the self. This is how the Vaisesikas meet the objection of the critics who say that Vaisesika *moksa* is indistinguishable from the unconsciousness of material bodies such as that of a pebble or a piece of wood. But the difficulty still remains as to how a state of felicity is to be conceived which is not an experienced felicity, i.e. of which there can be no consciousness whatsoever. The Vaisesikas argue that there is felicity in the self-centred repose and calm of the self, a felicity which may be realised by means of self-knowledge, self-collectedness, contentment and the highest righteousness. But since they maintain that this state of pure being of

with Vaisesika physics, which seeks an insight into nature evidently for a better mastery of it. This gives us a hint of the conception of freedom in original Vaisesika, which is completely washed out from the later version of the philosophy that we have from Prasastapada (*PDS* 637) and his commentators.

the self is also free from intelligence or consciousness, this felicity can only be a felicity of quiescence and sleep, the rest and calm of materiality as their critics point out. Further since happiness is always a felt happiness according to the Vaisesikas, it is a contradiction to suppose that there is natural felicity in the self even in the absence of consciousness.[11]

The Naiyayikas fully agree with the Vaisesikas in viewing freedom as the total emancipation of the soul from the bonds of the material world and its experiences. According to them also, in the liberated soul is completely annihilated all the psychical qualities like consciousness, desire, motivation, pleasure and suffering. But the Naiyayikas differ from the Vaisesikas in further arguing that it is useless to imagine that in this state of freedom the soul is also mysteriously characterised by some kind of transcendental bliss. We may quote Vatsyayana to see how elaborately he wants to argue this from the Nyaya standpoint:

According to some, in the state of liberation is manifested the eternal bliss of the self, like its all-pervasive magnitude... This view being without proof is unacceptable. There is no perceptual, inferential or scriptural ground to prove that in the state of liberation is manifested the eternal bliss of the self, like its all-pervasive magnitude. ...Manifestation of eternal bliss is its awareness, i.e. its knowledge; its cause, namely that from which it originates, is to be mentioned. If this awareness is said to be eternal, like the bliss itself, then there will be no difference between the soul 'in its state of wordly existence' and 'in its state of liberation'. Just as the liberated soul is (imagined to be) characterised by the bliss and its awareness, which are eternally present, so must also be the soul in its state of worldly existence, because both (the bliss and its awareness) are (assumed to be) eternal...

Now, if it is assumed that the awareness in the state of liberation of the eternal bliss is non-eternal, then the cause from which it originates must be specified. Let this cause be the conjunction of the self with mind along with other auxiliary causes. If the conjunction of the self with

11. Maitra 219-20.

mind is admitted to be the (main) cause, even then an auxiliary cause assisting this conjunction is to be mentioned... If virtue (*dharma*) is assumed to be the auxiliary cause, then its cause (i.e. of virtue itself) from which it originates must be mentioned. (The opponent may argue that the cause of virtue is *yoga-samadhi*. To this Vatsyayana answers:) ...If virtue resulting from *yoga-samadhi* is assumed to be the auxiliary cause, then it (virtue) being destroyed (after producing its specific result), because of its incompatibility with the fulfilment of the result, the awareness also will cease to exist. If there is no awareness of it (i.e. of the bliss) then it will be hardly distinguishable from the non-existent...

The indestructibility of virtue cannot be inferentially proved, because it has the characteristic of being produced... There is rather the inference to the contrary that whatever has the characteristic of being produced is non-eternal...

It cannot be argued that the connection with body etc. is the cause of obstruction (of the awareness of the eternal bliss on the part of the self), because the very function of the body etc. is to facilitate enjoyment (for the soul) and moreover there is no inference to the contrary (viz the soul without being connected with the body can experience any pleasure of pain)...

Even though there exist scriptural texts (apparently meaning that eternal bliss is manifested in liberation), there is no contradiction (with our view), because by bliss is meant in these scriptural texts the absolute non-existence of mundane suffering... In ordinary discourse also the word pleasure is frequently found as used in the sense of the absence of suffering.

There can be no liberation without a surrender of the attachment for eternal bliss, for attachment is characterised as a bondage. If one strives after liberation being attracted by the desire for eternal bliss under the idea that eternal bliss is manifested in liberation, one can neither attain liberation nor deserve it, for attachment is characterised as a bondage and it is not logical that one is liberated in spite of bondage.[12]

Vatsyayana thus does his best to prove that the state of liberation cannot be understood as the state of eternal bliss

12. Vatsyayana on *NS* i.1.22. Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya: NP i.86-8.

for the soul. But how does he positively describe liberation? Vatsyayana says,

Regarding liberation—that liberation which is the dissolution of all relations and the cessation of everything else—is a state of quietude (*santa*) in which disappears the manifold sins which are intensely painful and dreadful and as such why should an intelligent person not delight in liberation which is the cessation of all sufferings and is free from all consciousness of suffering?[13]

Elsewhere he gives us a simpler description of it as freedom from the dread of rebirth resulting from *karma* or action:

When attachment, aversion and ignorance are absolutely destroyed, activities (i.e. the good or bad actions performed by a person) do not lead to rebirth. Re-birth means being born once again, after the previous birth (i.e. life on earth) has come to an end. Such rebirth is caused by the craving for enjoyment of pleasures. When such craving has absolutely disappeared, there is no rebirth, for (in the absence of craving) there can be no further birth after the cessation of previous birth, and this (i.e. the total absence of rebirth) is nothing but liberation.[14]

The dread of rebirth is ultimately evaded by philosophical wisdom or the knowledge of truth (*tattva-jnana*). In the Nyaya view—i.e. in the form in which it comes down to us—the causal sequence through which philosophical wisdom is supposed to lead to liberation is as follows:

True knowledge leads to the removal of false knowledge. False knowledge being the cause of evil (*dosa*), its reremoval results in the removal of evil. Evil being the cause of motivation (*pravrtti*), its removal results in the removal of motivation. Motivation being the cause of birth (*janma*), its removal results in the removal of birth —i.e. the removal of the possibility of rebirth. Birth being the cause of suffering; its removal results in the removal

13. Vatsyayana on *NS* i.1.2. Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya NP i.29.
14. Vatsyayana on *NS* iv.1.63. Gangopadhyaya NP iv.87.

of suffering.[15] Thus is attained liberation which is the absolute deliverance from suffering.

So the ultimate cause of liberation is supposed to be true knowledge. But the question is: True knowledge of what? In the Nyaya view as it comes down to us, the answer is that it is the true knowledge of the self or soul in its purity, i.e. without the ignorant confusion of the soul with things and qualities that have really nothing to do with the soul. As Vatsyayana puts it.

What exactly is this false knowledge (which causes bondage and which, when removed by true knowledge, results in freedom)? The notion of the self in what is not self. To explain, (such false knowledge means) the 'erroneous notion' (*moha*) or the 'false idea concerning the self' (*ahamkara*) in the form: 'I am (the body or the like)'. In other words, the false idea regarding the self means the false cognition of one who cognises as self what is not self, in the form 'I am (the body or the like)'. What again is the group of entities which becomes the object of the false idea concerning the self? The group consists of the body, the sense-organs, the mind, pleasure and pain and cognition.[16]

The usual criticism of this view is that it makes freedom something utterly unattractive, inasmuch as with the attainment of freedom the self is supposed to revert to its inherent inertness—without any bliss and without consciousness in any form—which the Naiyayikas want us to believe to be the actual state of the soul in its purity. As this criticism is usually put, "No wise man will ever strive to attain final deliverance if, after all consciousness and life have been annihilated, it becomes similar to a piece of rock (*sila-sakala-kalpa*), if it is indistinguishable from a stone (*pasana-nirvisesa*), if it is inanimate (*jada*)."[17] But the Naiyayikas want boldly to face such a criticism, claiming that for the sake of attaining an absolute deliver-

15. *NS* i.1.2. *Moksa* is defined as absolute deliverance from suffering in *NS* i.1.22.

16. Vatsyayana on *NS* iv.2.1. Gangopadhyaya NP v. 3-4.

17. Stcherbatsky CBN 97-8.

ence from pain—which is the essence of freedom—it is necessary to renounce all prospects of pleasures also, for pleasure is after all inseparably connected with pain:

The Nyaya contention is that happiness has to be renounced as being inseparable from suffering, and as there is no experience of suffering in the highest state of freedom from pain there is also no experience of any transcendental felicity or satisfaction in the positive sense. It may be called a felicitous state only in the negative sense, i.e. as a state of freedom from the unrest of life and experience. The Naiyayika points out that though the psychological reality of pleasure as a positive experience cannot be denied, yet pleasure being inseparably connected with pain through the cause (*nimitta*), the substrata (*adhara*) as well as the experience (*upalabdhi*) of pleasure, there is no freedom from pain without the renunciation of pleasure along with it.[18]

This then is the main point of the traditional controversy over the Nyaya conception of freedom. While the Naiyayikas claim that freedom as absolute deliverance from suffering has to be viewed as a state beyond pleasure also, the critics of Nyaya argue that a state without pleasure or bliss or felicity can never be an attractive ideal. Because the controversy between the Naiyayikas and their opponents is usually focused on this particular point concerning the presence or absence of pleasure in liberation, the interpreters of Nyaya generally miss a more significant point. It is concerning the internal consistency of this conception of freedom with the fundamentals of Nyaya.

Is the Nyaya conception of freedom internally consistent?[19] Does it agree with the fundamentals of this philosophy? Or, does it give us the impression that it is somehow or other sought to be borrowed from some other

18. Maitra 220-1.

19. The best textual discussion of the question that I am aware of is the paper presented by Dr Mrinalkanti Gangopadhyaya at the UGC Seminar (Waltair, 1975) on "What is Living & What is Dead in Indian Philosophy". Dr Gangopadhyaya comes to the conclusion that this conception of freedom is inconsistent with the Nyaya philosophy and is evidently of the nature of a later graft.

quarter and artificially grafted on the Nyaya without much care for coherence and consistency?

We have just seen that in the Nyaya view, the ultimate cause of liberation is supposed to be the true knowledge of the soul or self. True knowledge destroys false knowledge; the destruction of false knowledge destroys evil; the destruction of evil destroys motivation; the destruction of motivation destroys the possibility of rebirth and therefore also of suffering. Liberation is this escape from suffering.

In this connection there inevitably arises the question concerning the cause of true knowledge itself. What are the preconditions of true knowledge without which there is ultimately no liberation? It is evidently impossible from the Nyaya point of view to think that true knowledge is without any cause whatsoever, nor is it possible for the Naiyayikas to argue that the preconditions for true knowledge are exclusive of the fundamental preconditions for knowledge itself. On the contrary, true knowledge being the highest form of knowledge must best satisfy the basic conditions for knowledge, i.e. without being mixed up with any other undesirable factor.

What then are the basic conditions for knowledge? While discussing liberation, the later Nyaya texts talk of various things no doubt—of pious acts, of the performance of unconditional duties, and so on. It has to be remembered however that notwithstanding their alleged efficacy for the psycho-physiological purification, none of these has any direct bearing on the production of knowledge. In the Nyaya view, the essential or fundamental preconditions for the production of any knowledge are definite and specified. They are: the conjunction of the self or soul with the body, and through this, its conjunction with *manas* (mind-stuff) and the sense-organs, and through them its conjunction with the objects of the external world. We have already discussed this and seen that without these conjunctions there is no knowledge—no consciousness—in the soul; hence the soul in its own inherent

nature is something essentially inert and unconscious (*jada*).

True knowledge, being a form of knowledge after all, cannot be caused by factors other than those that are essential for the production of knowledge. In other words, it can be generated only by the chain of conjunctions of the soul with the body, *manas*, sense-organs and the objects of the external world. Two propositions follow from this. First, bondage in the Nyaya sense is an essential causal condition for liberation. Secondly, true knowledge of the soul or self in its purity—the ultimate cause of liberation—is impossible. Both these points are indicative of the anomalous position to which Nyaya is reduced by its peculiar tendency to accept a view of freedom presumably alien to it.

In a sense it may be said of course that without bondage there is no freedom, for freedom is after all the freedom from bondage: the concept of freedom presupposes the concept of bondage, much as the idea of light presupposes that of darkness. But this is not what the Nyaya position means. It amounts to the assertion that *bondage is the most fundamental causal condition for the attainment of freedom*. Freedom is attained only by true knowledge and true knowledge is possible only when there is the conjunction of the soul with body, *manas*, sense-organs, etc. But the conjunction of the soul with body etc. means bondage, for in the standard Nyaya view bondage is nothing but the cycle of birth and rebirth—the transmigration of the soul from body to body. Really speaking, therefore, the ultimate cause of freedom is not true knowledge, as we are ordinarily asked to believe, for bondage is the precondition for true knowledge or the cause of true knowledge itself. Thus in the Nyaya view bondage becomes not merely a conceptual prerequisite for the understanding of freedom; it becomes the ultimate cause of freedom—the most essential and vital factor that produces freedom. And this is a flat and irreconcilable contradiction. Free-

dom produced by bondage can be no better than illumination produced by darkness.

Thirdly, from the Nyaya point of view, is there really any possibility of ever attaining the knowledge of the true nature of the soul—of the soul in its purity—which, according to Vatsyayana, is the real cause of liberation? The answer is in the negative. We have already discussed the reasons for this. The basic precondition of all knowledge is the chain of conjunctions of the soul with the body, *manas*, sense-organs, and through them with the objects of the world. Hence there is no possibility at all of knowing the soul-in-itself, or the soul in its pure state without its association with the body etc. The knowledge of the soul in its purity being thus an impossibility from the Nyaya standpoint, how can it be argued from the same standpoint that such knowledge leads to liberation?

As a matter of fact, even the talk of the existence of the soul in its liberated state is questionable from the Nyaya point of view, inasmuch as there can be no positive evidence for it. The positive or direct evidence for the existence of anything is the awareness or knowledge or consciousness in the form that it exists. However when the soul attains liberation it is supposed to be without consciousness in any form. It becomes a purely unconscious entity, or, in Indian terminology, *jada*. There is no question for a purely unconscious entity to be aware of its own existence. Hence in the Nyaya view, when the soul attains liberation it ceases even to know that it exists.

Other anomalies are also created in Nyaya by its view of liberation. It follows from the admission of the Naiyayikas themselves that there is really no scope for proving the existence of the liberated soul. The only proof for the existence of the soul is inferential: the qualities called desire, aversion, motivation, pleasure, suffering and knowledge require some substratum and hence we are obliged to infer the existence of the soul as the substratum of these qualities. As it is put in the *Nyaya-sutra*, "The marks (or probantia) for inference of the soul are desire, aversion,

motivation, pleasure, suffering and knowledge."[20] According to the same philosophy, however, the soul in liberation has none of these marks. Without the total annihilation of desire, aversion, motivation, pleasure, suffering and knowledge, there is no liberation for the soul. If so, how are we to assume that the soul exists even after attaining liberation? Without the characteristic marks for the inference of the soul, there is no question of inferring its existence. And, in the standard Nyaya view, inference is the only mode of proving the existence of the soul. Thus, in short, the very existence of the soul in liberation amounts to an undue assumption.

The traditional answer to this criticism is well-known. The Naiyayikas claim that it is already proved on independent grounds that the soul is eternal. If so, it cannot cease to exist after attaining liberation. Thus, though there is no mark to infer the existence of the soul in liberation, its eternality proves its existence even after liberation.

But such a defence of the view is not without difficulty of its own. What are the proofs for the alleged eternality of the soul? The classical arguments offered in the *Nyaya-sutra* are:

(1) "Because, immediately after being born, an infant has experience of joy, fear and sorrow (and this) as a result of the lingering of the memory of the past experiences."[21] Vatsyayana explains the argument: "An infant, immediately after being born (and therefore) in spite of having no experience of the causes of joy, fear and sorrow in this birth, nevertheless experiences joy, fear and sorrow which are inferred from certain marks (viz behaviour). But these joy etc. are produced by the recollection of past experiences, and not otherwise. Recollection of past experiences is not possible without past experiences and past experiences are possible only if there are previous births.

20. *NS* i.1.10. 21. *NS* iii.1.18. Gangopadhyaya NP iii.33.

Therefore it is proved that the self persists even after the destruction of the (previous) body."

(2) "Because (the just-born infant) has the desire for sucking the mother's breast as a result of the habit of having food in the previous birth".[22]

(3) "Because no living being is observed to be born without desire".[23] Explains Vatsyayana: "When a living being is born, it is born as endowed with desire. Desire, again, is due to the recollection of the objects previously perceived. The previous perception of objects is not explicable without (the admission of) a body in the previous birth. Thus the soul recollects the objects perceived while having connection with a previous body and gets attached to those objects. It follows from this that the self, as connected with the two bodies, undergoes rebirth. In this way, the previous body presupposes a further previous body, which again presupposes a still further previous body—and so on. As a result the connection with the body of the conscious soul is without any beginning. Therefore attachment also is without any beginning. Thus is established the eternality of the soul."

These are the classical Nyaya arguments intended to prove the eternality of the soul. The main basis of these arguments is a number of facts observed concerning the behaviour of the just-born infant—its experience of joy and sorrow, its tendency to suck the mother's breast and a bundle of its other desires. But let us not try here to revaluate the understanding of these data of observation in terms of the knowledge of contemporary science which, though not irrelevant for the assessment of the Nyaya view of the soul and its rebirth, is not the main point that concerns us here. What we are here primarily concerned instead is the internal consistency of the Nyaya view of the soul with its view of the liberation or freedom. And our question is: Are the alleged proofs for the eternality

22. *NS* iii.1.21. 23. *NS* iii.1.24. Gangopadhyaya NP iii.41.

of the soul just quoted logically adequate for the purpose of proving the existence of the soul even when it is supposed to attain liberation or freedom in the Nyaya sense?

The proofs quoted can at best establish only the past existence of the soul of a new-born infant. But they prove nothing whatsoever about the existence of the soul in liberation. Vatsyayana argues of course that the grounds supposed to prove the past existence of the soul can logically be extended to prove also its future existence, or, in other words, the grounds for provng the past birth are also grounds for proving the future birth—or rebirth—of the soul. Even admitting his argument, the eternality of the soul in the Nyaya sense remains unproved, because by eternality of the soul the Naiyayikas themselves cannot mean only the cycle of birth and rebirth but also the existence of the soul as totally and absolutely free from being entangled in this cycle of birth and rebirth. The arguments offered in the *Nyaya-sutra* and elaborated by Vatsyayana prove nothing whatsoever as to the possible existence of the soul outside its involvement in the cycle of birth and rebirth, because all these arguments are based on data which, in the Nyava view, are indicative of the connection of the soul with the body—maybe the body of the past birth and hence by implication the body also of the future birth. Thus, in short, what these arguments prove for the Naiyayikas is only the birth and rebirth of the soul and nothing more than that—nothing in short of the possible existence of the soul in liberation, which is supposed to mean its existence outside the cycle of birth and rebirth. It is therefore only false complacence for these philosophers to imagine that the eternality of the soul is already proved on independent grounds and hence, though there is no positive proof for the existence of the soul in its liberated state, such an existence is to be assumed as implied by the eternality of the soul.

To sum up: The conception of liberation as we come across it in the Nyaya philosophy—far from enriching it—creates a number of internal inconsistencies for the philo-

sophy. Hence the presumption is that this conception of freedom has really nothing to do with the fundamentals of the philosophy but is somehow or other grafted on it. This presumption becomes stronger when we note two peculiarities of the *Nyaya-sutra*. First the text opens with the promise that the philosophical knowledge proposed to be discussed in it results in the attainment of the summum bonum (*nihsreyasa*, usually interpreted as liberation). The norm of Indian philosophical writing demands that the text should have a conclusion (*upasamhara*) discussing what is promised in the introduction (*upakrama*). Peculiarly, however, the *Nyaya-sutra* is completely indifferent to the question of the summum bonum in its concluding portion, which is devoted only to the technical discussion of the number and nature of the logical fallacies. This discrepancy between the opening promise and actual conclusion shows that the text is not really serious about the problem of liberation, howsoever contrary it may be to the usual understanding of the Nyaya philosophy. Secondly, an entire section of the *Nyaya-sutra*[24] is apparently designed for a detailed discussion of the question of liberation. It is called *apavarga-pariksa-prakarana*, literally 'section on the critical examination of liberation'. The least that is expected of a section like this is some positive proof for the reality of liberation. But the entire section shows no tendency to prove that liberation is real. It discusses all sorts of puerile questions pertaining mainly to the contents of the Mimamsa philosophy. This obliges the later exponents of Nyaya to offer some positive proof for liberation and, peculiarly enough, the main proof they manage to offer has nothing to do with the fundamentals of the Nyaya philosophy. Such proof is in most cases some scrap quoted from the Upanisads which, as forming part of the Veda, are supposed to have scriptural authority.[25]

All this is very interesting, because it leads us to see

24. *NS* iv.1.58-67.

25. See the view of Phanibhusana Tarkavagisa summed up in Gangopadhyaya NP iv.93ff.

the actual source from which the view of liberation is borrowed and grafted on the Nyaya philosophy. The view that the true knowledge of the soul results in freedom from the fetters of the material world is an integral part of the idealistic speculations of the Upanisads and, as later elaborated in Advaita Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism, fully coheres with these philosophies. The basic assumptions of such a view of freedom are two. First, spirit alone is the ultimate reality. Secondly, the material world as ordinarily known is ultimately unreal. These two propositions, if assumed, lead to a specific understanding of the nature of bondage, viz the wrong sense of involvement of spirit in matter resulting from ignorance. Thus knowledge, by removing this ignorance, leads to the realisation of the exclusive reality of the spirit, and that is freedom. Far from being incongruous with the idealist outlook, such an understanding of freedom is a necessary corollary of it.

However, when taken out of its idealist context and grafted on the Nyaya philosophy, which belongs to the hard core of the antithesis of Indian idealism, the same conception of freedom cannot cohere with the fundamentals of the philosophy; it creates all sorts of incongruities instead. Some of these anomalies are noted by us, though at the present stage of research it is premature to judge when and how such an alien conception of freedom is borrowed from the idealist quarters and sought to be transplanted on the Nyaya. But one point seems to be fairly obvious. With all its zeal to refute and reject philosophical idealism on epistemological and ontological levels, the Nyaya philosophy fails to develop any positive conception of freedom consistently with its own fundamentals. At the same time, largely because of the tremendous boosting given by the Indian law-givers to the idealist conception of freedom there eventually develops a situation in Indian philosophy in which all the philosophers are required to declare their conception of freedom. In such a circumstance, with no alternative conception of freedom

of their own—and evidently also motivated by the anxiety to evade the censorship of the law-givers—the Naiyayikas appear to surrender to the idealist conception of freedom, though without managing to make it consistent with their basic opposition to idealism. This naturally is the weakest point of the Nyaya philosophy in the form in which we have it. It becomes a convention of the later Naiyayikas —and also of the Vaisesikas—to declare that the true knowledge of the soul in its purity leads to liberation. Thus is sought to be accommodated a basic feature of idealism within the framework of the antithesis of idealism.

6. The Samkhya Conception of Freedom

The other prominent philosophical view belonging to the hard core of the antithesis of idealism is the Samkhya. We have already discussed the problem of reconstructing its original form and it is no use speculating here on the possible view of freedom in the original Samkhya. What concerns us instead is the conception of freedom as found in the extant works in which the philosophy is substantially modified and forced into the Vedantic mould. However what remains of the original emphasis of the philosophy in these extant works makes this conception of freedom so grossly anomalous that the idealist critics of later Samkhya find it easy to dismiss it as a bundle of inconsistencies.

The *Samkhya-karika* opens with the declaration that freedom means the total extinction of suffering in all forms. This is supposed to be achieved by the absolute negation of all experiences which leaves the soul as an independent and autonomous reality. There is thus some similarity between this conception of freedom and that of Nyaya. "But while according to Nyaya this self-autonomy means the realisation of the self's essence as spiritual substance in which not even consciousness remains, according to Samkhya the self is consciousness itself, not a substance,

far less an unconscious spiritual substance".[26] Thus in later Samkhya, not only the conception of liberation but also of the soul liberated are much nearer the Vedanta. The soul or self—called *purusa*—is absolutely detached from all mundane experiences and hence by its intrinsic nature absolutely free. All experience is transformation of *buddhi* or understanding which is itself a product of primeval matter or *pradhana*. Because of ignorance however the self somehow or other gets involved in the modifications of *buddhi* and thus finds itself under bondage, and hence is subject to suffering. The only way out of it is true knowledge, i.e. of the soul as actually and totally detached from everything that is the product of *pradhana* or matter.

It is the cause of *purusa*'s suffering, however, this experience of *purusa*, which is mere appearance. Realisation of true freedom means the cancellation of this appearance by the realisation of *purusa*'s detached essence through discriminative knowledge. It is because bondage is mere appearance that freedom is attainable. If bondage were natural (*svabhavika*), freedom would not be possible except by self-destruction... Bondage is therefore of the nature of *bhrama* or illusion whose origin is to be sought in some adventitious factor or *upadhi*. In this case the *upadhi* is the attachment of *purusa* to *prakrti*, i.e. *purusa*'s unique relation to *prakrit* through its specific understanding (*buddhi*) in each case, an understanding which is an evolute of *prakrti*. It is this unique relation of every single *purusa* to a specific understanding in *prakrti* ... that constitutes the empirical life or *janma*. It entails bondage through the experience it reflects in *purusa*. It thus leads to *aviveka*, nondiscrimination or attachment of *purusa* to *prakrti*. This *aviveka*, nondiscrimination, can be removed only by removing its cause, which is *purusa*'s relation to *prakrti* through the understanding. This relation is beginningless, but not endless and can be terminated by *vivekakhyati* or discriminative knowledge of *purusa* and *prakrti*. With the realisation of *purusa's* essential detachment from *prakrti*, the latter falls off from *purusa*. The understanding (*buddhi*) dissolves

26. Maitra 227.

into the formless *prakrti* in this state and there is no experience as a consequence.[27]

How does this conception differ from that of Advaita Vedanta? It is argued that while in Samkhya the realisation of the sense of difference of the soul from everything else—its absolute aloofness or *kaivalya*—is the cause of liberation, in the Vedanta view liberation is attained by the realisation of the sense of identity of the soul with everything. Everything is the soul, says the Vedantist. The soul is absolutely different from everything, says the Samkhya philosopher. That is the basic point on which the two conceptions of freedom are supposed to differ.

Freedom therefore is attained, according to Samkhya, by the realisation of difference, i.e. of the essential detachment of *purusa* from *prakrti*. It is therefore an intuition of difference as distinguished from the intuition of identity. It is intuition of identity that leads to *moksa* according to Samkara, an intuition which involves the cancellation of difference as a moment. According to Samkhya however what is required for *moksa* is the accentuation of difference and not its cancellation, the accentuation, in other words, of the essential detachment of *purusa* and *prakrti*. Through this differentiation *purusa* recovers its singleness, *kaivalya* or detached essence.[28]

But all this is not to be misunderstood. According to Advaita Vedanta, freedom results from the realisation of the identity of the soul with everything in the universe only in a specific sense. In this sense the soul alone is real and whatever appears to be something other than the soul is unreal. Seeing the soul in everything really means seeing everything other than the soul as products of ignorance. Since the starting point of Samkara is that there must not be any confusion between the real and the unreal, the realisation of the socalled identity of the soul with everything really means the sharpest conceivable diffentiation of the soul from everything—the differentiation between the only real and all that is unreal. In other words; this means the total aloofness of the soul

27. *Ib.* 229. 28. *Ib.* 229-30.

from everything imagined to make the material world. From this point of view the conception of liberation in later Samkhya does not substantially differ from that of Vedanta. Both have for their ideal a state of the soul in which it is supposed to be absolutely uninvolved in the material world. Further, it is argued by both that such a state is attainable by pure knowledge, because the bondage of the soul—its involvement in the material world—is due to ignorance.

Where the current Samkhya view differs from Vedanta is concerning the status of the external world. Even the representatives of later Samkhya cannot eliminate from the philosophy the main point of its original form, viz the evolution of the world from primeval matter called *pradhana* or *prakrti*. Further, even in later Samkhya this evolution of the visible world from primeval matter is understood as real transformation which, in Indian terminology, is called *parinama*. This is to be contrasted with what is called *vivarta* in Advaita Vedanta, meaning some kind of illusory transformation—or the illusion of a transformation—of the pure spirit into the material world. The cause of this illusion of transformation is supposed to be ignorance. In the Advaita view therefore this illusory status of the material world makes it easy to claim that the highest philosophical knowledge, by removing the ignorance that creates the illusion of the material world, allows the spirit to realise its exclusive reality and that is freedom. But practically the same view of freedom imagined to be attained by the pure spirit on the strength of philosophical knowledge alone becomes highly anomalous for later Samkhya, in which the material world remains a real transformation of the eternal primeval matter.

What is actually doubtful about original Samkhya is the place of *purusa* in it. In the later version of the Samkhya, however, the place of *purusa* is highly exaggerated; it is moreover understood in a sense precariously

close to that of the soul in Advaita Vedanta. This would not have created gross internal inconsistency for the philosophy if the status of the material world also were reduced to that of an illusion. But that is not done. Later Samkhya, with all its compromise with Vedanta, fails totally to outgrow the materialist proclivity of its original form. Hence the question remains: How is the material world—the real transformation of eternal primeval matter—related to the pure spirit or *purusa* which is supposed to be ever-detached? Later Samkhya fails to give us any coherent answer and becomes a bundle of gross inconsistencies. It is claimed that the entire course of the evolution of the world from primeval matter serves the purpose of the enjoyment of *purusa*, overlooking the simple point that the *purusa* cannot enjoy *prakrti* and at the same time remain completely aloof from it. Peculiarly enough, it is also claimed that the course of evolution of the world from *prakrti* serves the purpose of the liberation of the *purusa*, overlooking again the simple point that if the world is basically real it can only strengthen for the *purusa*'s bondage in the later Samkhya sense.

The *Samkhya-karika* declares that the evolution of *prakrti* is meant to serve the purpose of the enjoyment of the *purusa*. As a matter of fact, two of the proofs for the existence of the *purusa* offered by the *Samkhya-karika* are directly based on this understanding.

Purusa must exist, argues the *Samkhya-karika*, because the assemblage of objects is for another's use. Gaudapada explains the argument:

In like manner as a bed, which is an assemblage of bedding, props, cords, cotton, sheet and pillows, is for another's use, not for its own; and its several component parts render no mutual service; thence it is concluded that there is a man who sleeps upon the bed, and for whose use it was made; so this body, which is an assemblage of the five elements, is for another's use; or, there is soul (*purusa*) for whose enjoyment this enjoyable body, con-

sisting of an aggregate of understanding (*buddhi*) and the rest, has been produced.[29]

Again, argues the text, the *purusa* must exist, because there must be an enjoyer. This is practically reemphasising the same argument and Gaudapada interprets it:

In like manner as there must be someone to partake of food flavoured with sweet, sour and salt, pungent, bitter and astringent flavours, since there is no tendency to enjoyment in understanding (*buddhi*) and other products of *prakrti*, there must be soul by which this body is to be enjoyed.[30]

With such proofs for the existence of *purusa* the same text argues that the evolution of the world from primeval matter serves the purpose of the liberation of the *purusa*.

This evolution of *prakrti*, from understanding to the special elements, is performed for the deliverance of each soul respectively—done for another's sake as for itself. As it is a function of milk, an unintelligent substance, to nourish the calf, so it is the desire of the *pradhana* to liberate the soul. As people engage in acts to relieve desires, so does the undiscrete principle to liberate the soul.[31]

Such then is the confusion created in later Samkhya when the idealist conception of the soul and its freedom is somehow or other grafted on a philosophy with strong materialist proclivity. The evolution of the material world is meant for the enjoyment as well as liberation for the soul, though enjoyment of the material world means bondage for the soul. When the Samkhya is reduced to such a bundle of inconsistencies, it becomes easy for an idealist like Samkara to expose and ridicule the philosophy. Argues Samkara,

If the spontaneous activity of the *pradhana* has, as you say, no reference to anything else, it will have no reference not only to any aiding principle, but also to any purpose or motive, and consequently your doctrine that the *pradhana* is active in order to effect the purpose of the *purusa* will become untenable. If you reply that the *pradhana* does not indeed regard any aiding principle, but

29. Gaudapada on *SK* 55. 30. *Ib.* on *SK* 56. 31. *SK* 56-8.

does regard a purpose, we remark that in that case we must distinguish between the different possible purposes, viz either enjoyment on the part of the soul, or final release, or both. If enjoyment, what enjoyment—we ask—can belong to the soul which is naturally incapable of any accretion of pleasure or pain? Moreover, there would in that case be no opportunity for release. If release, then the activity of the *pradhana* would be purposeless, as even antecedently to it the soul is in the state of release... If both, then, on account of the infinite number of objects of the *pradhana* to be enjoyed by the soul there would be no opportunity for final release. Nor can the satisfaction of a desire be considered as the purpose of the activity of the *pradhana;* for neither the non-intelligent *pradhana* nor the essentially pure soul can feel any desire.

If finally you should assume the *pradhana* to be active, because otherwise the power of sight (belonging to the soul on account of its intelligent nature) and the creative power (belonging to the *pradhana*) would be purposeless; it would follow that, as the creative power of the *pradhana* does not cease at any time any more than the soul's power of sight does, the apparent world would never come to an end, so that no final release of the soul could take place.[32]

Samkara further shows the absurdity of the conception of liberation from the point of view of the later Samkhya. Liberation or freedom is supposed to mean the total or absolute extinction of suffering. But all suffering is assumed to be due to *pradhana*. If therefore the *pradhana* be real as well as eternal, philosophical knowledge in no form can make real suffering vanish. From the point of view of Advaita Vedanta, the material world—and hence suffering in it—is an unreal product of ignorance. According to it, therefore, philosophical knowledge, by removing ignorance—the fundamental cause of suffering—can also bring the total extinction of suffering. However what is self-consistent for Advaita Vedanta is inconsistent for Samkhya. according to which the world is basically real, and so also the sufferings caused by it. As Samkara argues,

32. Samkara on *Br. Su.* ii.2.6.

But perhaps you (the Samkhyas) will say that, after all, suffering is real. In that case, however, the impossibility of release becomes all the more undeniable, especially as the cause of suffering (namely *pradhana*) is admitted to be eternal. And if to get out of this difficulty you maintain that although the potentialities of suffering (on the part of the soul) and of causing suffering (on the part of *pradhana*) are eternal, yet suffering, in order to become actual, requires the conjunction of the two—which conjunction, in its turn, depends on a special reason, viz the non-discrimination of the *pradhana* by the soul—and that hence, when that reason no longer exists, the conjunction of the two comes to an absolute termination; whereby the absolute release of the soul becomes possible. We are again unable to accept your explanation, because that on which the non-discrimination depends, viz the *guna* called *tamas* (i.e. the inertia-potential assumed by Samkhya as a constituent of *pradhana*) is acknowledged by you to be eternal. And as there is no fixed rule for the (successive) rising and sinking of the influence of the particular *guna*-s, there is also no fixed rule for the termination of the cause which effects the conjunction of the soul and the *pradhana* (i.e. non-discrimination) hence the disjunction of the two is uncertain, and so the Samkhyas cannot escape the reproach of the absence of final release resulting from their doctrine.[33]

Samkara further points out that the only self-consistent view of liberation resulting from knowledge of the soul as pure consciousness is to be found in Advaita Vedanta, according to which the material world as a whole—and therefore the sense of bondage—though empirically real is ultimately unreal.

To the Vedantin, on the other hand, the idea of final release being impossible cannot occur even in his dream, for the self he acknowledges to be one only, and one thing cannot enter into the relation of subject and object, and scripture, moreover, declares that the plurality of effects originates from speech only. For the phenomenal world, on the other hand, we may admit the relation of sufferer and suffering just as it is observed, and need neither object to it nor refute it.[34]

33. *Ib.* ii.2.11.
34. *Ib.*

All this means only one point. The conception of freedom in Advaita Vedanta, as the outcome of extreme idealism, is fully consistent with the other fundamentals of that philosophy. When, however, the same conception is transplanted on an alien philosophical soil with pronounced materialist proclivity—as it is sought to be done in later Samkhya—the whole thing looks monstrous. Logically, there are two alternatives for the Samkhya philosophers. First, to work out a conception of freedom consistently with the fundamentals of the philosophy, viz the view of the evolution of the visible world from primeval matter. Secondly, to renounce these fundamentals fully and accept the idealist position, viz that the pure spirit is exclusively real and the material world is a mere appearance. Only in the second alternative can it be consistently argued that true knowledge of the spirit means liberation. But what does this mean? It means that the Vedantic view of freedom is consistent with Vedanta but not with any vestige of original Samkhya. What we have from the *Samkhya-karika* onwards is an enthusiasm for the Vedantic view of freedom along with the emphasis on the primacy or *pradhana*. The result is a bundle of inconsistencies.

We have seen that the same is basically true of the Nyaya-Vaisesika. Its main point is the total rejection of idealism and, on the basis of it, to develop a deeper insight into nature, its constitution and laws. Particularly from Vatsyayana[35], however, this philosophy seems to take a strange turn and its representatives are found trying to make room within it for the Vedantic conception of freedom which presupposes the unreality of nature itself. The result of this is a muddle.

There is thus the repetition of a pattern as it were: philosophies originally opposed to idealism leaning on the idealist view of freedom. The same pattern is seen in the

35. *NS* i.1.2—like the other *sutra*-s discussing *moksa* in *NS*—viewed as later addition.

case of the Purva-mimamsa, in the history of which the intrusion of an alien conception of freedom is clearer.

7. Freedom and the Mimamsa

Whatever may be the case of Nyaya-Vaisesika and Samkhya in their original form, it is fairly certain that early Mimamsa has no conception of liberation, nor of the soul supposed to be liberated. The essential theoretical prerequisites of the Mimamsakas do not need them. But the later ones vacillate and want to cultivate an interest in *moksa*. When they do this, they appear to be left with the only choice of the Vedantic view of *moksa*, howsoever incongruous it proves for their own fundamentals.

Jaimini is frankly indifferent to the ideal of liberation. He does not care even to mention it anywhere in his work. As a very renowned traditional scholar puts it, "Jaimini, the author of the *sutra*-s of the Purva-mimamsa philosophy, does not at all discuss the question of liberation."[36] Commenting on these *sutra*-s, Sabara finds neither the scope nor the need for discussing it.[37] To some of the modern scholars this appears to be a strange omission. But that seems to be the result of a wrong expectation. The indifference to *moksa* is only to be expected of Mimamsa. Its be all and end all is the performance of the Vedic rituals or *yajna*-s, as a result of which the philosophy is alternatively known as *Yajnavidya*. In matters concerning the human ideal (*purusartha*), it has only a simple proposition to defend: perform the rituals, for that alone is the desirable thing to do. The Mimamsakas are naturally required to offer a rationale for this. And the only rationale with which they come out is extremely simple: the performance of the rituals brings pleasure or happiness. Somewhat in the manner of a psychological hedonist Jaimini says that pleasure is the only goal of life.[38] Sabara comments:

36. Mm. Yogendranatha 61.
37. *Ib.* Cf. Jha PMS 36.
38. *MS* iv.1.2.

That upon which follows the happiness of man—i.e. on the accomplishment of which man's happiness comes about —that act is one 'which serves the purpose of man' (*purusartha*).
—Why so?
Because its understanding is due man's desire to obtain pleasure.[39]

Elsewhere[40] Sabara elaborately argues that the main purpose to be achieved is the enjoyment of pleasure; the performance of the rituals is the means to this end. An act, if fruitless, cannot be attractive for anybody. No amount of scriptural command can induce a man to perform it unless he is fully convinced that it ensures pleasure. This is specially true of the Vedic rituals, the performance of which is a strenuous—and often also an expensive—proposition. Hence it is so important for the Mimamsakas to convince people of the pleasure necessarily ensured by the performance of the Vedic rituals.

While arguing this, Sabara gives us the unmistakable impression that it is fatal for the Mimamsakas to talk of any other human ideal. Since the ideal of *moksa* as the absolute negation of mundane pleasures is already worked out in the Upanisads, the total silence of Jaimini and Sabara about it cannot be due to their lack of awareness of it The only presumption is that they refuse to accept it, because it goes against their basic purpose. Whether this purpose—the all-absorbing interest in *yajna*—has any relevance for us today is not our present point. It is indeed the hangover of a primitive belief which we no longer require. But our present point is that howsoever primitive it may be it has no place for the illusion of *moksa*. Instead of liberation, the early Mimamsakas are aware of only one human ideal or *purusartha*: it is the pleasure ensured by *yajna*.

The Mimamsakas have a special term to refer to this pleasure. They call it *svarga*, which ordinarily means

39. *Sabara-bhasya* tr Jha 709. 40. Sabara on MS vi.1.3.

'heaven'. As Sabara says,[41] *svarga* is not something that brings pleasure; it is by its inherent nature identical with pleasure. Following this tradition, the Mimamsa works take pleasure itself as *svarga*.

This raises an interesting question. Since *svarga* or heaven means pleasure and since pleasure is enjoyed in this world itself, is it necessary for the Mimamsakas to conceive heaven as something other-worldly? An eminent modern authority on Mimamsa answers: "It is difficult to determine the exact view of the Mimamsakas on this question. Sabara's commentary gives us the apparent impression that from the Mimamsa standpoint it is unnecessary to assume any world other than the one in which we live where heavenly pleasures are enjoyed or the pains of hell suffered."[42] But it is perhaps unnecessary to be so cautious, because there are grounds to think that what our author calls here "the apparent meaning" of Sabara's commentary is its actual meaning. One of these grounds is that nowhere in Jaimini's *sutra*-s and Sabara's commentary on them we read of heaven as something other-worldly. Another ground for it is that the followers of Vedanta, while refuting Mimamsa, take the word *svarga* or heaven in an essentially this-worldly sense. Thus the author of *Vivarana-prameya-samgraha* says in so many words that in the Mimamsa view the experiences called heaven and hell take place in this world itself: heaven is nothing but the pleasure one enjoys here on earth, while its opposite—the pain suffered—is called hell.[43]

Admitting that this is the standard understanding of the Mimamsakas, we are confronted with a question of considerable theoretical importance. If it is unnecessary to assume heaven and hell in their usual other-worldly sense, is it necessary to admit the existence of the soul supposed to migrate from this world to the next where virtue is

41. *Ib.* on *MS* vi.1.2.
42. Bhutanatha Saptatirtha ii.4n (on *MS* vi.1.2).
43. *Ib.* ii.5n. (on *MS* vi.1.2).

rewarded and vice punished? At least in popular belief, the concept of the soul is inextricably interlinked with that of the other world. If the Mimamsakas are indifferent to the latter, how serious are they about the former?

Samkara wants us to believe that the Mimamsa philosophy in its earliest available form takes no notice of the soul. Jaimini does not mention it at all and the discussion of the soul that we have in subsequent Mimamsa literature is borrowed from Vedanta. Let us see how Samkara puts the point.

Two aphorisms (*sutra*-s) of the *Brahma-sutra* are specially designed to prove the existence of the soul over and above the body.[44] Commenting on them, Samkara raises the question: Why should the author of the *Brahma-sutra* take this special care to prove the soul? The work is after all traditionally supposed to be supplementary to the *Mimamsa-sutra* and the question of the soul, being all-important, is reasonably expected to be already covered in Jaimini's work. But, answers Samkara, the fact is that in the whole of the *Mimamsa-sutra* there is not even a single aphorism discussing the soul. Its commentator Sabara discusses the soul no doubt; but this discussion is borrowed from Vedanta. Besides, an early Mimamsaka called Upavarsa says in so many words that for the discussion of the soul one is referred to the Vedanta (also known as *Sarıraka*). As Samkara referring to the soul in Mimamsa, comments:

True, this has been declared there by the author of the commentory (i.e. Sabara), but there is in that place no *sutra* about the existence of the soul. Here (i.e. in the *Brahma-sutra*), on the other hand, the author of the *sutra* himself establishes the existence of the soul after having disposed of a preliminary objection. And from hence the teacher Sabara Svamin has taken the matter for his discussion of the point... For the same reason the reverend Upavarsa remarks in the first *tantra* (i.e. Mimamsa)—where an opportunity offers itself for the discussion of the existence of the soul—'We will discuss this in the

44. *Br. Su.* iii.3.53-4.

Sariraka (=Vedanta)' and allows the matter to rest there.[45]

This indifference to the soul in original Mimamsa fully coheres with its indifference to the ideal of liberation, because what is liberated is supposed to be the soul. If therefore we accept Samkara's view that the concept of the soul is subsequently borrowed by Mimamsa from Vedanta, the presumption is that the ideal of liberation or *moksa* which we actually come across in the later Mimamsa literature is also borrowed from Vedanta.

This leads us to see a strange shift in the Mimamsa literature from the older ideal of the performance of rituals for the sake of pleasure alone to the new ideal of liberation. As Hiriyanna referring to the older ideal, remarks, "but the doctrine in its present form has practically thrown it overboard, and replaced it by the ideal of *moksa*."[46]

This process of transformation begins somewhat hesitantly, as it appears from the writings of Prabhakara and Kumarila, the two most outstanding representatives of later Mimamsa.

Prabhakara[47] raises the question: Why is it that Jaimini and Sabara are totally silent about the ideal of *moksa*? Because, he answers, they are interested only in *karma* or ritual, while one interested in attaining *moksa* will have to renounce *karma*. Thus the ideal of *moksa* falls outside the scope of Mimamsa proper. The talk of *moksa* to a person attached to *karma*, adds Prabhakara, will only create confusion for him. It is because of this consideration that Sabara does not discuss the ideal of liberation.

The subtle shift in Prabhakara's own position needs to be carefully noted. He does not reject the older ideal of ritual or *karma*. He does not plead outright for the acceptance of the ideal of liberation instead. He admits that the

45. Samkara on *Br. Su.* iii.3.53.
46. Hiriyanna 332.
47. Jha PMS 36.

ideal of *moksa* does not agree with the older one of *karma*. Still, unlike Jaimini he does not summarily brush aside the ideal of *moksa* because of its undesirability from the point of view of genuine Mimamsa. On the contrary, he accepts it as a fully valid ideal, notwithstanding its inconsistency with the authentic Mimamsa viewpoint. There are even grounds to think that Prabhakara shows some admiration for the ideal of *moksa*, for in the course of the discussion under consideration, he quotes a passage from the *Gita*[48]—a text which, in defence of the ideal of liberation, strongly denounces the Mimamsakas for their exclusive concern with pleasure resulting from the rituals.[49]

This shift of Prabhakara towards the ideal of *moksa* becomes all the more pronounced among his followers. The most famous interpreter of Prabhakara is Salikanatha, the author of the *Prakaranapanjika*. In this work[50] we read a definition (or description) of *moksa* which flouts everything that the Mimamsa basically stands for. *Moksa*, says Salikanatha, is the absolute annihilation of the merit-and-demerit (*dharma-adharma*) resulting from *karma*. Significantly, Salikanatha does not reject the ideal of *moksa*. He accepts it. What then does his admiring description of *moksa* amount to? *Karma*, it is well-known, is all that Mimamsa cares for. It is nothing if not a rationalisation of *dharma-adharma* resulting from *karma*. If therefore by *moksa* is intended to mean the total extinction of all this, nothing can be more undesirable from the genuinely Mimamsa standpoint than the lure of such an ideal. The indifference of Jaimini and Sabara to the ideal of *moksa* is thus easily understood. But not the admiration of Salikanatha for the same ideal, which virtually amounts to a surrender of the essentials of the Mimamsa. Not that Salikanatha actually surrenders it; he remains otherwise a strong defender of Prabhakara's version of the Mimamsa.

48. *Gita* iii.26.
49. *Ib.* ii.42-4.
50. see Jha PMS 36.

But the hesitant acknowledgement of the alien ideal of liberation shown by Prabhakara becomes in Salikanatha a pronounced compromise with it. Since, among the followers of Vedic orthodoxy, this ideal of liberation is worked out by the Vedantists, Salikanatha's compromise is really a compromise with Vedanta, which during his time becomes extremely powerful. This tendency to compromise with Vedanta gradually grows among the followers of Prabhakara, until a stage is reached when Gauda Brahmananda can smoothly declare that the followers of Prabhakara have nothing adverse against the Vedanta philosophy.[51]

Such an assertion, to say the least, is extremely strange, because philosophically speaking the entire drift of Mimamsa as interpreted by Prabhakara is against Vedanta, particularly Advaita Vedanta from which Prabhakara's followers want to borrow the view of liberation. Here is just an example. Advaita Vedanta, as a form of extreme idealism, is vitally dependent on the evidence of illusion, which it interprets in a way most convenient for itself: like the snake illusorily perceived in the rope, the material world experienced is conjured up by ignorance and has the peculiar status of being neither actually existent nor totally non-existent. This theory—known as *anirvacaniya-khyati*—is absolutely indispensable for Advaita Vedanta Prabhakara's Mimamsa by contrast, as a form of uncompromising rejection of philosophical idealism, goes to the extent of denying the facthood of illusory experience as such. We have seen that this view is known as *a-khyati*—the view of "no illusion". According to it, there is really nothing called illusory experience. What is usually called an illusory experience is in fact nothing but the failure to discriminate between two intrinsically right or valid experiences—one of the nature of memory and the other of the nature of perception—e.g. the snake remembered and the rope perceived in bare outlines as merely some-

51. Yogendranatha 66.

thing present before the perceiver. Without such an understanding of what others call illusory experience, the entire theoretical structure of Mimamsa as understood by Prabhakara crumbles down. Its acceptance however means the total rejection of the most important theoretical ground of Advaita Vedanta. And yet a later writer like Gauda Brahmananda wants us to believe that Prabhakara and his followers have nothing against the Vedanta philosophy! Such is the absurdity created in the new intellectual atmosphere in which the Vedantic conception of freedom —though fully alien to the real spirit of Mimamsa—is grafted on it.

The same is broadly true of the later Mimamsakas who follow Kumarila. Among them also we see the reassertion of the tendency to submit to the Vedantic or near-Vedantic conception of *moksa*. But since this conception itself is the outcome of a number of theoretical positions intrinsically incompatible with the fundamentals of the Mimamsa philosophy, its acceptance by the followers of Kumarila results only in some theoretical inconsistencies.

A hesitant acceptance of the view of *moksa* is perhaps to be traced to the writings of Kumarila himself. In the *Slokavartika* he says that one desirous of *moksa* has to renounce the injunctions and prohibitions leading to definite results (viz pleasure or heaven).[52] Such a statement is strange for a Mimamsaka, because the rationalisation of ritual injunction and prohibition constitutes the very essence of Mimamsa. It is therefore not without reason that the commentator Parthasarathi Misra expresses doubt that this statement is genuinely Kumarila's.[53] Besides Hiriyanna[54] points to the incompatibility of this statement with the attitude expressed by Kumarila in his other work called the *Tantravartika*. However it has to be noted that the Vedantic view of *moksa* cannot be detached from the Vedantic view of the soul or self, while Kumarila himself expresses a view of the soul which not only ap-

52. Kumarila *SV* sambandhaksepa-parihara 110.
53. Jha PMS 38. 54. Hiriyanna 335.

pears peculiar from the older and authentic standpoint of Mimamsa but moreover contains an expressed bias for Vedanta. In the *Slokavartika,* he comes out with the following concluding remarks on his discussion on the soul: Sabara, he says, discusses in the commentary on the *Mimamsa-sutra* about the soul the bare minimum that is required to dispel the doubt about it; the knowledge of the soul acquires firm footing only by the study of Vedanta.[55] In the context of Jaimini's total indifference to the concept of the soul, this attitude of Kumarila is indicative of a definite shift towards the Vedantic view of the soul. And this view of the soul, once accepted in the Mimamsa philosophy, easily paves the path for the acceptance of the view of *moksa.*

The result of all this is ruinous for the integrity of the theoretical fundamentals of the Mimamsa. Gauda Brahmananda enthusiastically declares that Kumarila himself recommends the Vedantic view of the soul, which therefore must form part of the Mimamsa as understood by him.[56] But how can this be at all possible when such a view of the soul necessarily implies that the material world is only an appearance? Sucarita Misra, an eminent follower of Kumarila, does not even raise the question. Within the framework of the Mimamsa philosophy, he simply goes on elaborating the Vedantic view of the soul and therefore also of its salvation as understood in Advaita Vedanta.[57] Parthasarathi Misra, another eminent interpreter of Kumarila, tries of course to draw a subtle distinction between Samkara's conception of liberation and the one attributed to Kumarila:

Parthasarathi Misra explains Kumarila's *moksa* as *prapanca-sambandha-vilaya,* i.e. as dissolution of the individual's connection with an empirical world. It thus differs from Samkara's *moksa,* which in its negative aspect involves not the mere cancellation of our connection with the world but the cancellation of the world itself—not

55. Kumarila *SV* atmavada 148.
56. Yogendranatha 67.
57. *Ib.* 69.

prapanca-sambandha-vilaya merely, but *prapanca-vilaya. Prapanca,* the world of experience, is illusory stuff according to Samkara, such stuff as our dreams are made of. With the intuition of the Absolute, the principle of illusion being cancelled, the world which is its construction becomes cancelled of itself... According to Kumarila however this world does not dissolve, but only the bonds that attach the individual to a world and thereby cause experience of pleasure, pain, etc."[58]

But what is meant by dissolving only the bonds that attach the individual to the world? The later interpreters of Kumarila answer:

Our attachment to the world is threefold being due to our connection with (1) a body as the abode of experiences, (2) sensibilities as the instruments of experiences and (3) objects (sound and the like) as the objects that are experienced. Through these threefold connection the individual is a subject of experiences of pleasure, pain, etc. The freedom of the individual means the absolute destruction of this threefold connection with the world... Freedom is the cessation of this connection and thereby the cessation of pleasures, pain, etc.[59]

It is not difficult to see how far removed all this is from the original position of the Mimamsakas, which is above all the defence of a simple proposition: the performance of the rituals is the only desirable thing to do, because that alone ensures the enjoyment of pleasure in this world. Far from encouraging any speculation concerning a state of the soul where it is supposed to be free from all experiences of pleasures and pains, Jaimini and Sabara stubbornly defend the view that the enjoyment of pleasure resulting from ritual performance is the highest human ideal (*purusartha*). Kumarila[60] himself says in so many words that he is motivated to refute philosophical idealism mainly because it goes against the Mimamsa view that the performance of the Vedic rituals ensures real pleasures in the real world. Yet the concession to the

58. Maitra 232.
59. *Ib.* 233.
60. Kumarila *SV* niralambana-vada 11-13.

Vedantic view of the soul proves so fatal for his self-consistency that his own followers try to push into it a very near-Vedantic conception of liberation, viz the absolute aloofness of the soul from the world supposed to result from the annihilation of all possible connections with it.

The later followers of Kumarila are nevertheless confronted with another question. How is this state of liberation of the soul—supposed to result from the annihilation of all its connections with the world—to be understood? Is it a state of absolute extinction of all experiences, i.e. inclusive of the experience of happiness or bliss? Or, is it characterised by bliss or felicity, though in some transcendental form? Parthasarathi Misra wants to accept the former alternative and thus he subscribes to a view of liberation reminiscent of the later Naiyayikas.[61] But the majority of Kumarila's later followers are inclined to accept a view which is more in agreement with the Vedantic one. According to them, "in the state of *moksa*, merit (*dharma*) is completely exhausted and there is no fresh acquisition of merit and thus there is also no happiness as the effect of religious merit. Since such happiness has a beginning in time, it must also perish in course of time. But there is another kind of happiness which is not an effect in time. This is the natural happiness of the self (*svabhavika-atmananda*) which remains overpowered (*abhibhuta*) in the empirical life but will come to manifestation in the state of metempirical freedom."[62] Since in the state of liberation, the self enjoys this transcendental bliss which is natural for its inherent nature, the difference of this view with the Vedantic one becomes quite thin. The resulting situation is so peculiar that one of our most eminent traditional scholars—in defence of his own view of the supreme importance of Vedanta—goes to the extent of arguing: "It is clear that both the sects of Kumarila and Prabhakara admit that the ultimate reality (*brahman*) is of the nature of existence-consciousness-

61. Maitra 234.

62. *Ib.* 233-4.

bliss (*sat-cit-ananda*) and that, though the individual soul is really identical with it, the phenomenal world is illusorily experienced because of beginningless ignorance (*avidya*)."[63] This, if true, calls for scrapping practically everything philosophically significant in Kumarila's writings, specially his magnificent polemics against idealism and all its important collateral positions. But Kumarila himself allows such a crisis to develop in his version of the Mimamsa by trying to make some place in it for the Vedantic or near-Vedantic view of the soul. He would have done much better by sticking to the original position of Jaimini, who knows such a view of the soul but who curtly refuses even to mention it in the *Mimamsa-sutra,* evidently because he also knows that such a view does not agree with the theoretical fundamentals of the Mimamsa.

8. Freedom and the Lokayatas

We thus see the same story being repeated in the histories of Nyaya-Vaisesika, Samkhya and Mimamsa. Because of the basic hostilities of these philosophies to the idealist outlook, they cannot be compatible with the totally negative view of freedom which is a direct corollary of extreme idealism. Peculiarly enough, in the comparatively later versions of these philosophies with which we are more familiar, we see a pronounced tendency to succumb to the same idealist view. This is done recklessly as it were to the grave danger created for the theoretical fundamentals of the Nyaya-Vaisesika, Samkhya and Mimamsa. From the point of view of the conception of freedom, the Nyaya-Vaisesika becomes only a bundle of inconsistencies, the Samkhya can evade inconsistencies only by fading out into the Vedanta and the later Mimamsakas move away so far from the original position of Jaimini that the representatives of Advaita Vedanta can triumphantly declare that their hearts remain with the Vedantists.

63. Yogendranatha 69.

In view of all this, one of the crucial questions concerning the conception of freedom in Indian philosophy naturally is: Why does such a phenomenon repeatedly happen? Why do the philosophies basically opposed to idealism eventually succumb to the essentially idealist view of freedom?

At the present stage of historical research, it may be premature to attempt a full answer to this question. But we may mention here a very interesting clue to this mystery which it seems to be permissible to read in what the Lokayatas say.

To begin with, let us have a few words on the problem of freedom as discussed by the Lokayatas.

Among the opponents of Indian idealism, the Lokayatas are the only philosophers to call for a total rejection of the idealist view of soul and its salvation. With their characteristic simplicity they declare that all talk of liberation—like that of heaven and of the transmigrating soul—is a fiction. There is nothing called heaven, nothing called liberation and there is no soul migrating to the other world: *na svargo napavargo va naiva"tma paralaukikah*. Though intensely to the distate of Indian orthodoxy—and though put in a merely negative form—the importance of this simple declaration can hardly be overrated in the Indian context. The first precondition for moving towards a sensible conception of freedom is to scrap all nonsense about it. From the Lokayata point of view this nonsense is the illusory view of freedom—usually called *moksa*—which casts its dark shadow on practically the whole field of later Indian philosophy. The Lokayatas summarily reject it, and along with it they reject also the conception of the soul supposed to be liberated. The special interest of this must not be overlooked, for the later Indian philosophers who, in spite of their antipathy to idealism are driven to accept the idealist view of liberation, do it mainly because they try to accommodate within their views the conception of the soul. Once it is admitted that the soul or the spirit is essentially alien to matter

and the material world, it is only natural to imagine that its freedom consists in the return to its inherent nature, which in other words means getting disentangled from the bondage of matter. From the Lokayata viewpoint, however, all this is meaningless or absurd, for what the others consider to be the soul is nothing but a very special kind of organisation of matter resulting in the human body. Accordingly, the body itself is the soul or self. In traditional Indian philosophy, there is literally a barrage of propaganda against this position. People are asked to believe that its impiety apart, the view is too naive and stupid to be seriously taken by responsible thinkers. However, as we have already argued, if there is anything in traditional Indian philosophy that has successfully stood the test of advanced scientific knowledge, it is this proposition of the Lokayatas, viz that consciousness—ordinarily understood as the differentia of the spirit or soul—is only a product of matter.

Rejecting thus the conception of the soul, the Lokayatas talk of enjoying life rather than evading it. While the others view life as only a painful prelude to eternity, the Lokayatas are the only Indian philosophers to insist on making "the most of our brief lives as human animals". There is no sense, according to them, in taking such a gloomy view of human existence as to imagine that the only way of avoiding suffering is to negate life altogether. Thus, while the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas ponder that "freedom from suffering which is the essence of true spiritual freedom entails also the abjuration of happiness which is inseparable from suffering", the Lokayatas argue:

> The pleasure which arises to men from contact with
> sensible objects
> Is to be relinquished as accompanied by pain—such is
> the reasoning of fools.
> The berries of paddy, rich with the finest white grains,
> What man seeking his true interest, would fling away
> because covered with husk and dust?[64]

64. *SDS* 2.

In other words, it is foolish to think that the pleasures of life are to be negated even though they are accompanied by certain amount of pain. You do not throw away the grains because of the husk, nor do you refuse the fish because of its bones.

All this is severely criticised by Indian orthodoxy as the most vulgar pursuit of sheer banality without the least awareness of the nobler and loftier values of life. From the Lokayata viewpoint, however, the question is: What precisely is meant by the loftier value of life? Does it mean the total negation of life under the idea that nothing is more important than the salvation of the soul? This, as the Lokayatas understood, is at best an illusion with which so many philosophers have only deceived themselves. The basic fact is that there is no soul and hence nothing called its salvation or *moksa*. Nor, as the lawgivers want people to believe, does the higher value of life consist in feeding and fattening parasitical priestclass who make a living on the mumbo-jumbo of the *sraddha* and other rituals. You have only to put the basic claims of such rituals to the simple test of everyday practice to see how absurd they all are. Yet people are asked to see virtue in their performance. If therefore there is real banality and vulgarity made to appear as higher or nobler values of life, it is to be found in these prescriptions for the people, which are nothing but crass deceptions under tall talk. Rejecting them all therefore the Lokayatas argue in favour of the full acceptance of life.

This is an admirable beginning, particularly in the general Indian context of the inflated importance attributed to the negative view of freedom—and ideal of escaping life and stultifying all experiences. But in all presumption, it remains only as a beginning and its promises are never fulfilled in traditional Indian philosophy. From the fragments of the Lokayata that survive—and on the basis of which we are obliged to judge it today—it appears that all its insistence on accepting and enjoying life remains far too inadequate to inspire people to have real confidence in

their heads and hands, so that they can move forward towards a greater mastery of nature and effectively intervene in the existing state of social affairs—to change the world and to work for the real emancipation of the real human beings. We are not aware of the Lokayatas ever visualising an extension of human control over nature and, in spite of their bitter protest against the priestly exploitation of the people, we do not get from them a consistent social norm as an alternative to the prevailing one, nor any programme of action for changing the prevailing social relations. In short, the Lokayatas do not bequeath us with an adequate and positive view of freedom, howsoever bold and important may be their rejection of the negative view of it. We shall later see why it is historically premature for them to work out a positive view of freedom.

9. Being and Consciousness

Notwithstanding this limitation of the Lokayata view, we have in the popular verses attributed to them a suggestion which, when properly worked out, has perhaps some light to throw on the mystery of the great lure of the idealist conception of freedom in Indian philosophy, particularly of the later period.

The Lokayatas are the only philosophers of India to assert—though inevitably in their own way—that the socio-ethical values propagated by the philosophers are not necessarily the outcome of detached theoretical considerations. These are also connected with—and are sometimes the instruments of—maintaining the economic and other privileges of certain classes of people. These days we talk of the ideological instruments of the ruling class and of the class-interest lurking behind ideologies. Had the Lokayatas been able to speak in these terms, they would have been revolutionaries in our sense. But they are only heretics—perhaps the most heroic of the heretics in Indian philosophy—without being revolutionaries in our

sense. Nevertheless they are our only philosophers to see that certain views and attitudes admirably suit the economic interest of the parasitical class, or, as they put it, are created to be the source of their livelihood (*jivika dhatrnirmita*). In their terminology, the social parasites are *buddhi-paurusahinah*—those who have neither intelligence nor manliness. The talk of Vedic rituals and of the scriptures—like the makeup and other paraphernalia of the ascetics—all these, according to a popular verse of the Lokayatas, are created to be the source of livelihood of those social parasites.[65]

This is usually taken to be a savage satire and there is no doubt that it is intended to be so. At the same time it will be an error to overlook the additional significance that it has. It is an effort—however rudimentary that may be—to connect ideology with the nature of living. The mode of consciousness is not unconnected with the mode of being.

It is true that the Lokayatas appear to realise only one aspect of this connection, and that too in their own way. Certain types of ideology are propagated for the purpose of feeding the social parasites, as they say in so many words. This is one way of connecting the mode of living with the mode of thinking. And there is no error in the connection conceived. Ideology *is* often a source of livelihood for the privileged minority. It *is* often an instrument for exploiting the people.

Though not wrong, such a view of the relation between thinking and being is only one-sided and therefore inadequate. The other aspect of this connection—about which our Lokayatas show no awareness—is that the mode of consciousness is also determined by the mode of living. This is of crucial importance for the question we are going to discuss. It means among other things that a grave danger is created for the philosophers in so far as they are obliged to live as social parasites. It is the danger

65. *Ib.* 5.

of their consciousness being invaded by ideas and values that find favour with the vested interests, and this in spite of these being basically incompatible with the theoretical fundamentals which the philosophers want consciously to defend. In other words, in so far as the philosophers are obliged to live on doles—on gifts, charities and financial favour in other forms—they cannot resist the values that the dole-giving society finds necessary for its own safety. This creates a crisis particularly for those philosophers who want to inherit and develop certain theoretical positions that are flatly incompatible with the fundamental assumptions underlying these values.

With this point in mind, we may return to the apparently bewildering phenomenon we have discussed at some length. In the comparatively later period philosophers inheriting world-views basically opposed to idealism repeatedly surrender themselves to a view of freedom directly following from the idealist outlook. What possibly accounts for this?

It may be that unlike idealism these philosophies are originally conceived without a well-defined view of freedom. But this does not mean that in the later period when all the philosophers are required to declare their view of freedom they should all accept the patently idealist view of it, as if it were the only possible one. There is nothing unusual for a later representative of a philosophy to try to fill in some gap in its earlier form. What is unusual is that he tries to fill it up with a hostile view militating against the philosophy itself. The whole thing is all the more bewildering because those who are found to do it are among the maturest of the Indian philosophers keenly aware of the consistency or otherwise of their own fundamentals with all sorts of collateral positions in philosophy, which accordingly they accept or reject.

Evidently there is no explanation of the phenomenon on the purely theoretical level. We have to seek clues to it outside mere theoretical considerations. One such extra-theoretical considerations is already noted by us. It is the pressure of the law-givers on the philosophers, demanding

of the latter the acceptance of ideas and attitudes that suit the vested interests. But this may not be the whole story, for the view of the soul and its salvation seems to become some kind of make-believe with which these later philosophers apparently deceive themselves. Could it be that their mode of material existence—the position in which they find themselves in society—makes them unresisting tools of the law-givers or that they become passive victims of a view of freedom which though alien to their philosophical inheritance suits their social being?

Pending a thorough investigation of the problem we venture here a suggestion, tentative though it may be. For convenience of discussion, we shall confine ourselves mainly the case of the Nyaya-Vaisesikas.

Little can positively be asserted today about the origin of their view. So also about the mode of living or source of livelihood of the founders of the philosophy.[66] But our main question here is concerning the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas. How do they maintain themselves? What is the position in which they find themselves in society? Does it entail any ideological obligation for them?

At the present stage of research, it is of course being unrealistic to expect full answers to these questions. Practically nothing is known of the personal life of our philosophers, except for a negligible minority. The stray information about some of them that has come down to us is obscured under the overgrowth of legends and mythologies. But this does not mean that we have to give up all attempts to understand the mode of their material existence. There remains one broad fact about them and its significance is not to be overlooked. Outside the Buddhists and Jainas, all the later Indian philosophers are Brahmins. We are not aware of any later Nyaya-Vaisesika, for exam-

66. Assuming Dasgupta's view that Nyaya epistemology grew out of the methodology of ancient Indian medicine, we may presume that the originators of this philosophy were not social parasites in the later sense.

ple, who is not a Brahmin, nor can we easily imagine one not to have been one.

This means that because of their position in society these philosophers are entitled to certain economic and social privileges. But this also means such a dreadful curse for them that in spite of inheriting the most brilliant science-oriented thought, they remain helplessly—and perhaps also unconsciously—exposed to the influence of a counter-ideology that suits the safety of the society which provides them with these privileges.

A prominent feature of this counter-ideology is the doctrine of soul and its salvation. It demands withdrawal of interest from the material world and therefore also from the inequities of the real society. With the general acceptance of *moksa* as the summum bonum by the philosophers, the redactors of the epics and the Puranas—the most powerful mass-media of the country—can work undisturbed for reconciling people to it. This done, all propositions of intervening in the existing state of affairs lose significance. How can the Brahmin parasites, as part of the establishment, resist a view of freedom which works for the security of the society that ensures this parasitism?

From this point of view there is not much difference between the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas and their idealist opponents. Being aloof from the labour of production, they succumb to a view of freedom which not only originates from parasitism but is also entrenched in it. Where they differ from the idealists is that they also want to inherit and develop an altogether different world-view. We do not know what leads them to do so or why, in spite of being Brahmin parasites they prefer to be logicians and atomists. What is positively known, however, is that the world-view which otherwise suits their intellectual preference does not agree with their view of freedom to which they appear to be unconsciously driven by the peculiarly unfortunate circumstance of being dependent on doles for their livelihood.

10. Vatsyayana

In the history of Nyaya, the enthusiasm for *moksa* becomes prominent from Vatsyayana,[67] who probably belongs to the Gupta period. This period witnesses certain achievements in Indian science,[68] thanks at least partially to the patronage of the Guptas. But the nature of this patronage is not to be misunderstood. We have seen how Varahamihira and Brahmagupta have to concede to crass superstition in order to get away with their science. The assumption of an overall science policy of the Gupta rulers leaves this unexplained. On the contrary, there are grounds to think that, along with the restrained support for science, the Guptas invest the Brahmins with special responsibilities of ideological propaganda in the classical pattern as visualised by the law-givers. We follow Sharma's analysis of this.

"It was an age of agricultural expansion, evidenced by the land-grants to the brahmanas in the backward areas."[69] But these are not to be misunderstood as acts of pristine piety:

According to the charters in return for land grants the priests were obliged to render religious services, which might secure the spiritual welfare of the donors or their ancestors. The secular obligations of the priestly beneficiaries are rarely laid down; the only example is the Chammak copper-plate of the Vakataka king Pravarasena II, which imposes certain obligations on one thousand brahmanas who are granted one village. It enjoins that they shall not conspire against the king and the kingdom, commit theft and adultery, slay brahmanas, and poison kings etc.; further they shall not wage war and do wrong to other villages. All these are negative obligations, which imply that the priests enjoyed the land on condition that they would not act in opposition to the established social and political system. These were probably taken for granted on the part of the religious beneficiaries in other charters. But it is natural to expect that the brahmanas more than repaid their generous donors and patrons by

67. see *supra* notes 19 & 35.
68. see *supra* p 89.
69. Sharma APIIAI 235.

maintaining law and order in the areas under their charge and impressing upon the people the sacred duty of carrying out their *varna* functions and of obeying the king, who from the Gupta period was represented as embodying in his person the attributes of various gods. Hence whatever may have been the intentions of the donors, it would be wrong to think that these grants served only religious purposes. Certainly the priests prayed for the spiritual well-being of the donors and their ancestors, and never supplied any soldiers as the bishops did in England; but where was the need of military service if the people could be persuaded to behave themselves and to acquiesce in the existing order?[70]

Is Vatsyayana personally a beneficiary like this? Does he belong to some family or group of such beneficiaries? These questions can be answered after we settle his exact date and place, and make a thorough search of the relevant epigraphic and other records. Meanwhile, let us note what is already obvious. He belongs to a caste with no ostensible means of livelihood than donations or gifts received and, at least roughly speaking, he lives in an age during which the ideals of the law-givers—that the Brahmins must live on the gifts received—is being extensively implemented in social reality, as part of the state policy. In response to such gifts, the Brahmins are only expected to act as the ideological apologists of the vested interests —are to persuade the people to behave themselves or to acquiesce in the existing order. The philosopher's way of doing this is to propagate the view that the supreme ideal of life is not to intervene in the existing state of affairs of the material world but to emancipate the spirit from the fetters of material world, i.e. to strive after *moksa* or liberation. Vatsyayana does this, however incongruous it may prove for his otherwise magnificent defence of an essentially rational system of logic and epistemology—called *anviksiki-vidya*—the main purpose of which is to develop a better insight into nature and its constitution.

He thus creates for the Nyaya a new tradition in which

70. *Ib.* 257.

it is made to appear as a queer blend of extreme rationalism with the doctrine of the soul and its salvation, called *adhyatma-vidya*. No less queer is the assertion with which he wants to justify it. The unique subject-matter of Nyaya, he says,[71] is of course *anviksiki-vidya*, because without this it would have been mere *adhyatma-vidya* like the Upanisads. But the really consistent interpreters of the Upanisadic *adhyatma-vidya* understand matters quite differently. The most effective way of saving *adhyatma-vidya*, they know, is to silence once for all the pretentious claims of logic. This explains the polemic against logic in Badarayana's *Brahma-sutra*.[72] This also explains why Samkara[73] opens his commentary on it with the curt rejection of the validity of all *pramana*-s. All this is highly consistent, because the essential prerequisite of *adhyatma-vidya* is faith in the scriptures, which is theatened by an unqualified confidence in logic.

By contrast, Vatsyayana's own claim that the differentia of Nyaya is *anviksiki-vidya* though it is somehow or other also *adhyatma-vidya* is flatly inconsistent. Are we to understand this as the personal tragedy of a philosopher whose intellectual curiosity leads him to be a brilliant rationalist but who is at the same time condemned by his society to depend only on that form of livelihood which demands of him also an active propaganda of *adhyatma-vidya* suiting the political interest of this society? If so, in so far as he defends *anviksiki-vidya*, he is a conscious scientist of his age. But in so far as he is also obliged to defend *adhyatma-vidya*, he is only an unconscious victim of his society, which opens for him the only career of parasitical existence. In any case, the latter aspect of his philosophy has no special interest for us, because it does not differ from extreme idealism from which it is borrowed. For us, what is living in his contribution is the magnificent defence of *anviksiki-vidya*. What is dead in it is his surrender to *adhyatma-vidya*.

71. see *supra* p 274f. 72. *Br. Su.* ii.1.11f & Samkara thereon.
73. Samkara *adhyasa-bhasya* quoted *supra* p. 52.

11. Prasastapada

About a century after Vatsyayana comes Prasastapada, the first systematic exponent of Vaisesika philosophy. In his case the same tragedy—that of an eminent scientist cursed by his caste status to be an ideological apologist of the vested interests—looks much more pitiable. If the author of the *Vaisesika-sutra* wants to evade the censorship of the law-givers with some sundry show of orthodox piety, Prasastapada, though working out a much more advanced exposition of the physics and atomism of the same Vaisesika philosophy, prostrates himself as it were before the law-givers and reemphasises all their values. For this purpose he has to go out of his way, because physics and atomism—which are his main concern—have nothing to do with the values of the law-givers which he forces into the Vaisesika philosophy. All this is serving the cause of the vested interests much more crudely and bluntly than is done by Vatsyayana. Prasastapada not only eulogises the ideal of *moksa* but also defends the general principles of the *varnasrama* society and argues that they are inviolable because they are sanctioned by the scriptures and the law-codes (*sruti-smrti-vihitani*).[74]

Let us see how faithfully he follows in the footsteps of the law-givers.

For the purpose of maintaining law and order of his ideal society, Manu prescribes duties as classified under two heads, general and specific. We shall presently return to what he calls the general duties and see how they are misunderstood. However it is obvious from his law-code that Manu's own emphasis is on the specific duties, i.e. duties obligatory for the individuals as members of the specific castes in which they are born. These form the main theme of the *Manu-smrti*.

Prasastapada, without being a law-giver himself, wants meticulously to follow Manu in prescribing the same lists of duties. He also classifies duties under two heads,

74. Prasastapada *PDS* 637.

samanya or general and *visesa* or specific. And here is the philosopher's list of specific duties, i.e. those which he considers appropriate for the four castes:

brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya-vaiśyānām-ijyā-adhyayana-dānānī.

brāmaṇasya viśiṣṭāni pratigraha-adhyāpana-yājaṇānī svavarṇa-vihitāḥ ca saṃskarāḥ.

kṣatriyasya samyak prajā-pālanam asādhu-nigrahaḥ yuddheṣu anivartanam svakīyāḥ ca saṃskarāḥ.

vaiśyasya kraya-vikraya-kṛṣi-paśupālanāni svakīyāḥ ca saṃskarāḥ.

śūdrasya pūrva-varṇa-paratantryam amantrikāḥ ca kriāḥ.[75]

Thus Prasastapada first mentions the duties that are common to the three castes—Brahmins, Ksatriyas and Vaisyas. These are: sacrificial ceremonies (*ijya*—i.e. for the Brahmins to perform them, and for the Ksatriyas and Vaisyas to finance their performance), study (*adhyayana*) and charity (*dana*). Prasastapada then passes on to specify separately the duties obligatory for each of the four castes. The duties obligatory for the Brahmins alone are: acceptance of gifts, teaching, performance of ceremonial sacrifice and the general way of life prescribed by the law-givers as appropriate for the Brahmins (*svavarna-vihita-samskara*). The duties obligatory for the Ksatriyas alone are: governing the people, punishing the unholy, not refraining from war and the general way of life prescribed by the law-givers as appropriate for the Ksatriyas (*svakiya-samskara*). The duties obligatory for the Vaisyas alone are buying, selling, agriculture, cattle-raising and the general way of life prescribed by the law-givers as appropriate for the Vaisyas (*svakiya-samskara*). The duties obligatory for the Sudras alone are remaining subservient to the aforementioned three castes (*purva-varna-paratantryam*) and observing such rites as do not require the utterence of the holy *mantra*-s (*a-mantrika-kriya*).

It is hard to believe that such a passage should find any

75. *Ib.*

place in a work which is for us the first systematic exposition of Vaisesika physics and atomism. But the fact is that it is there and, what is most amazing, as forming part of the make-believe of its author! Apparently the philosopher—himself a Brahmin and therefore dependent on the doles provided for his caste by the *varnasrama* society —is devoid of any new vision when confronted with the question of what is to be done. The world in which he lives witnesses no new innovation in the technique of production; it is unaware of the emergence of any new class with the historic mission of transforming the society radically. In this stagnant world, the social and moral values of the *varnasrama* norm assume in the philosopher's consciousness the appearance of eternality. Indifferent to the question of whether his physics and atomism have at all any relevance for such values, the philosopher wants to delude himself with the idea of their absolute inviolability. He becomes a case of split personality. A part of his being remains true to science, while another part becomes abjectly servile to the law-givers. We have examples of such split personalities even among the working scientists in India and elsewhere today. But the society today promises new vision and new possibilities, and therefore also the prospect of a cure. Not so is Prasastapada's society. In spite of his physics, he remains a miserable victim of the law-givers' demands.

What we have discussed so far about Prasastapada's scheme of duties has evidently nothing to do with our main point here, viz the ideal of *moksa* or liberation of the soul. But we have not yet taken note of his scheme of duties in its totality.

Apart from the specific duties or *visesa-dharma*-s we have just noted, Prasastapada gives us a list of duties which he calls *samanya-dharma*-s or general duties. In prescribing duties thus divided under two broad classes, he follows again in the footsteps of Manu. We can therefore understand his model better if we go back to its archetype, i.e. the model set up by Manu himself.

What then is Manu's purpose behind the classification of duties under two broad heads—general and special? The question is unfortunately sometimes wrongly answered. Thus Maitra says,

Manu's classification of the Duties is one of the earliest attempts at a systematic treatment of this subject. Manu distinguishes between relative duties (*varnasrama-dharma*-s), i.e. duties relative to one's station in life, and common duties (*sadharana-dharma*-s), i.e. duties of universal scope and validity. The relative duties are the specific duties relating to one's station in life, i.e. one's station as determined by one's *varna* or caste and one's *asrama* or particular stage of life. The universal duties are the duties irrespective of one's age, caste or creed, i.e. duties obligatory on man as man and not as a member of a particular community or social class or as being at a particular stage or period of life. [76]

With such an understanding, our author proceeds to show the superiority of Hindu ethics, compared particularly to the Platonic one:

In this respect the Hindu classification is fuller and more complete than the Platonic classification of the virtues according to different social classes only. In the latter we miss not only a list of *sadharana* or common duties but also the distinctive Hindu classification according to *asrama* or moral capacity relative to one's particular stage of life.[77]

Again,

"In this sense the *sadharana-dharma*-s of the Hindus are a safeguard against communal egoism and intolerance. They provide, through a code of universal duties, a basis for a much more humanitarian treatment of the Sudra than the Platonic scheme would permit in respect of the barbarian and the helot who lack civic status.[78]

The phrase "humanitarian treatment of the Sudras" sounds extraordinarily strange after what we have already seen as the general attitude of the law-givers to them. What the above eulogy of Hindu ethics completely over-

76. Maitra 7. 77. *Ib.* 16. 78. *Ib.* 17.

looks is that there is no concept of "man as man" for an intensely class-conscious law-giver like Manu—no more than it exists for Plato. The Sudras are for Manu no less subhuman creatures than the slaves are for Plato. So the talk of duties "of universal scope and validity" is from Manu's point of view nothing more than a mere fiction.

But does he not speak of *sadharana-dharma*-s or general duties? There is no doubt that he does.[79] Lest however his purpose should be misunderstood, he wants to be clear—immediately before enumerating the list of ten of them—that these duties are supposed to be common only for the *dvija*-s, i.e. exclusively for those that belong to the higher castes of Brahmins, Ksatriyas and Vaisyas. "By twice-born men (*dviya*-s)", says he, "belonging to any of the four stages of life (*asrama*, viz student, householder, hermit and ascetic), the tenfold duties must be carefully obeyed."[80] There is this no question from Manu's point of view of these duties being common also for the Sudras. These are to be observed only by the members of the higher castes and therefore definitely not by the Sudras.

But why is it necessary for Manu's viewpoint to exclude the Sudras? A preliminary answer to this is to be found from an examination of some of the duties mentioned by him as belonging to his class of *sadharana-dharma*-s. The list includes wisdom (*dhi*), learning (*vidya*), cleanliness (*sauca*), etc., which from the law-giver's viewpoint are totally forbidden for the intrinsically polluted Sudras condemned to ignorance and darkness. But we have to go deeper into the question to see why Manu—and following him Prasastapada also—mentions such a separate list of general duties intended for the higher castes alone.

The duties of the Brahmins, Ksatriyas and Vaisyas are exhaustively enumerated by Manu. These are fully endorsed and admirably summed up by Prasastapada. The main duty of the Brahmins is to receive gifts for acting as priests and teachers. The main duty of the Ksatriyas

79. Manu vi.92. 80. *Ib.* vi.91.

is to maintain law and order, besides waging war. The Vaisyas are supposed to look after farming and trade, which are their main duties. These higher castes apart, there are the Sudras, whose specific duty—as understood by Manu and Prasastapada—is to be the main source of manual work essential for society.

Such then are the specific duties recommended by the law-givers for the different castes. Evidently these have only one purpose and that is to maintain the ideal society as visualised by them. But what about the liberation of the soul, which the Upanisads as scriptures declare to be the highest human ideal? The specific duties recommended for the different castes cannot serve the purpose. First, it is too much even for the law-givers to declare that by receiving gifts the souls of the Brahmins get liberated or that the souls of the Ksatriyas attain liberation because of their success in war and in maintaining law and order.[81] Secondly, admitting that the observance of specific duties is conducive to liberation, there is the possibility of even the Sudras attaining it. Such a possibility is never to the liking of the law-givers, for whom the bulk of manual workers are supposed to remain under the eternal bondage of slavery and serfdom. After all, the only purpose for which the creator creates them is to serve the others, i.e. the higher castes.

Thus, apart from the specific duties prescribed for the different castes, Manu feels the need of mentioning certain general duties which are supposed to be conducive to the ideal of attaining liberation. Understandably, such general duties are meant only for those that are entitled to attain liberation. In the law-giver's view they are only the *dvija*-s.

The real point of Manu's mention of a separate list of

81. Incidentally *Gita* ii.37 is quite outspoken about the results of observing the specific duties of the Ksatriya. The Lord God tries to inspire Arjuna to take up arms with the simple logic: "If you get killed in this war, you have heaven to enjoy; if you win the battle, you have the earth to enjoy."

"general" duties for the *dvija*-s is thus to indicate how they are to strive after liberation. The most renowned commentators of Manu want to be very clear about it. This list, as we have already said, includes *dhi* and *vidya* —wisdom and learning. Medhatithi and Kulluka Bhatta however insist that these are to be taken in specific senses. Wisdom or *dhi*, says Medhatithi,[82] is "real knowledge that dispels the doubt etc. caused by the hostile view"—*samyak-jnanam-pratipaksa-samsayadi-nirakaranam*. But what are the hostile views causing doubt? For the law-givers there is only one answer. Anything opposed to the scriptural view of the soul is a hostile view. This is confirmed by Medhatithi's interpretation of *vidya* or learning. This, he says, simply means the knowledge of the soul: *vidya atmajnanam*.

Kulluka Bhatta reiterates the main points and says: *sastraditattvajnanam dhih, atmajnanam vidya*[83]—wisdom means the knowledge of the ultimate truth characteristic of the scriptures etc. and learning means the knowledge of the soul. There is thus no difference between wisdom (*dhi*) and learning (*vidya*), for the ultimate truth revealed in the scriptures is nothing but the knowledge of the soul. And this truth—this knowledge—is supposed to be conducive to one thing. That is liberation.

That these commentators do not at all digress from the law-giver's intention can easily be seen from what Manu says immediately after giving his list of ten "general" duties. He declares:[84]

Those Brahmins who thoroughly study the tenfold law, after studying obey it, enter the highest state (*paramam gatim=moksa*).

A twice-born man (*dvija*) who with controlled mind follows the tenfold law and has paid his debts may, after learning Vedanta according to the prescribed rule, become an ascetic... He who has thus given up all rites, who is solely intent on his own object, (and) free from desires,

82. Medhatithi on Manu vi.92.
83. Kulluka on Manu vi.92.
84. Manu vi.93f.

destroys his guilt by renunciation and obtains the highest state (i.e. liberation: *paramam gatim=moksa*).

Kulluka Bhatta explains: "Those wise men who study these ten duties and after studying them remain steadfast to them along with the knowledge of the soul—they, because of the excellence of their knowledge of the ultimate reality, attain the highest state, by which is meant *moksa*."[85]

There is thus a special point in Manu's recommendation of a set of general duties over and above the specific ones for the members of the different castes. While the specific duties have the general purpose of maintaining the law-giver's ideal society, the general duties have the special purpose of ensuring salvation. These general duties are meant exclusively for the members of the privileged class, the law-giver's *dvija-s*. The toiling majority—known to the law-giver as the *sudra-s*—being debarred from it are not entitled to salvation. From the law-giver's point of view, the question of freedom does not arise for them, for the only purpose for which the creator creates them is to serve the privileged minority.

This in short is Manu's answer to the question: what is to be done?

Coming as it does from Manu, there is nothing surprising about it, for we do not expect anything better from one who is essentially an apologist of the vested interests of our traditional society. However what looks peculiarly tragic is that the same scheme of morality is taken up by Prasastapada as his own model and he reiterates it in all its essentials. By conscious intellectual preference, he chooses to be the first advanced exponent of Vaisesika physics and atomism and there is no doubt that judged by the standards of his age the step taken by him towards the understanding of nature and its laws is a very significant one. But the society in which he lives—and specially his misfortune of being a member of the parasitical

85. on Manu vi.93.

Brahmin caste—sets a definite limit to the range of his possible personal choice. This is specially so when it comes to the question of what is to be done. Prasastapada has nothing new to say from the standpoint of his advanced understanding of nature. His society and his own position in it do not allow him to be aware that an advanced insight into nature is convertible into an increased mastery over it and can thus open a new vision of freedom. Such an awareness dawns on the philosopher only when the objective conditions for them are fulfilled. The conditions are not there for Prasastapada. The typical Brahmin of the traditional stagnant society bows down before the law-giver. The negative view of freedom on which the law-giver insists is for him the only conception of freedom. Prasastapada pleads for its acceptance and along with it everything that the law-giver prescribes for the safety of the society that provides for the Brahmin parasites.

12. Summing Up

After Vatsyayana and Prasastapada things do not improve in the history of the Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy. The idealist view of freedom gets more and more entrenched in the consciousness of the defenders of logic and atomism and the dictates of the law-givers acquire for them the status of scriptural authority. The make-believe in all this becomes so firm for the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas that they lose all sense of their split-purposes—those of science and of counter-science. They at best deceive themselves with an idea of an imaginary compatibility of the two, often wasting their scholastic skill to prove this.

What is true of the later Nyaya-Vaisesikas is on the whole true of many other prominent opponents of idealism. Notwithstanding all that they do to remove the spell of idealism on Indian philosophy, they remain under its spell in so far as the view of freedom is concerned. The committed materialists or Lokayatas are about the only exceptions to this. They bluntly declare that any talk of *moksa* is an empty fable. But we have seen that in spite

of their rejection of the negative view of freedom they are yet far from developing an adequate and positive view of it.

Where traditional Indian philosophy really fails is thus in its effort to solve the problem of freedom. But this failure can be explained and hence it is possible for Indians today to overcome the most serious limitation of our philosophical tradition. The great thinkers of medieval India could not, any more than their colleagues in medieval Europe, go beyond the limits imposed on them by the underdeveloped technology of their times and the social relations determined by them. How can the solution of a problem, which as yet lay hidden in the undeveloped economic and social conditions, be expected from the mere brains of the philosophers, howsoever able these be?

In the history of world philosophy, the first glimpse of the positive conception of freedom is attained by the two prophets and publicists of modern science—Bacon and Descartes. What inspires them to have this new vision is the new role that science is called upon to play in the transformation of society then under the leadership of the merchants, navigators, manufacturers and statesmen—in short, the early progressive bourgeoisie: "Moreover, parallel with the rise of the middle-class went on the great revival of science; astronomy, mechanics, physics, anatomy, physiology, were again cultivated. And the bourgeoisie, for the development of its industrial production, required a science which ascertained the physical properties of natural objects and the modes of action of the forces of Nature. Now up to then science had but been the humble handmaid of the Church, had not been allowed to overstep the limits set by faith, and for that reason had been no science at all. Science rebelled against the Church; the bourgeoisie could not do without science, and, therefore, had to join in the rebellion."[86]

In order to understand the new vision of freedom that

86. Engels SSU 16.

inspires the prophets of new science, it is essential to note also the role of the toiling masses that furnish the "fighting contingent" for the bourgeois revolution. "But side by side with the antagonism of the feudal nobility and the burghers, who claimed to represent all the rest of society, was the general antagonism of exploiters and exploited, of rich idlers and poor workers. It was this very circumstance that made it possible for the representatives of the bourgeoisie to put themselves forward as representing not one special class, but the whole of suffering humanity. Still further. From its origin the bourgeoisie was saddled with its antithesis: capitalists cannot exist without wage-workers, and, in the same proportion as the medieval burgher of the guild developed into the modern bourgeois, the guild journeyman and the day-labourer, outside the guilds, developed into the proletarian. And although, upon the whole, the bourgeoisie, in their struggle with the nobility, could claim to represent at the same time the interests of the different working classes of that period, yet in every great bourgeois movement there were independent outbursts of that class which was the forerunner, more or less developed, of the modern proletariat."[87]

With this analysis of the role of the toiling masses in the transformation of the medieval world, we can see an essential factor that inspires the prophets of new science to move to a new vision of freedom. The new insight into nature, they feel, means new mastery over nature; new knowledge means for them new power. But it is not—as our Upanisadic thinkers once imagined—because of any magical power inherent in knowledge itself. The knowledge has to be actively transformed into power and the only agent capable of this transformation are the working hands.

The new vision of freedom is in short "a new orientation towards knowledge". As Bernal explains the essential feature of this new orientation,

87. *Ib.* 30-1.

"It was changed from being a means of reconciliation of man with the world as it is, was, and ever will be, come doomsday, to one of controlling Nature through the knowledge of its eternal laws. This new attitude was itself a product of the new concern with material wealth and brought about a renewal of interest of the learned in the practice of the trades of the artisan. In this way the Renaissance healed, though only partially, the breach between aristocratic theory and plebeian practice which had been opened with the beginning of class society in early civilisation and which had limited the great intellectual capacity of the Greeks... Indeed, the challenge to ideas that had been accepted for many centuries could only have been made at a time when the whole foundations of society were in question."[88]

Understandably the working hands—which once retreated to the background leaving all merits for the swift advance of civilisation to the mind alone—reassert their legitimate place in the new vision of freedom. Here is one of the ways in which Bacon expresses this vision:

Now among all the benefits that could be conferred upon mankind, I found none so great as the discovery of new arts, endowments, and commodities for the bettering of man's life. For I saw that among the rude people in the primitive times that authors of inventions and discoveries were consecrated and numbered among the gods. And it was plain that the good effects wrought by founders of cities, law-givers, fathers of the people, extirpers of tyrants, and heroes of that class, extend but over narrow spaces and last but for short times; whereas the work of the Inventor, though a thing of less pomp and show, is felt everywhere and lasts for ever.

But above all, if a man could succeed, not in striking out some particular invention, however useful, but in kindling a light in Nature—a light which should in its very rising touch and illuminate all the border-regions that confine upon the circle of our present knowledge; and so spreading further and further should presently disclose and bring into sight all that is most hidden and secret in

88. Bernal 375-6.

the world—that man (I thought) would be the benefactor indeed of the human race—the propagator of man's empire over the universe, the champion of liberty, the conqueror and subduer of necessities.[89]

Referring to his own conclusions, Descartes says,

They showed me that it is possible to arrive at knowledge very useful to life: and that instead of this speculative philosophy that is taught in the schools one can find a practical philosophy by which knowing the force and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens and all other bodies that surround us as distinctly as we know the different trades of our craftsmen, we could employ them in the same way to all uses for which they are appropriate and thus become the masters and possessors of nature.[90]

Man becoming "the propagator of man's empire over the universe, the champion of liberty, the conqueror and subduer of necessities"! Men becoming "the masters and possessors of nature"! How audacious all this must have sounded in the second quarter of the seventeenth century when they were first said! Yet how prophetic this new vision of freedom has already proved itself to be. Masters and possessors men astonishingly are of physical nature today, and the rate of progress of the further extension of this mastery has indeed become too staggering to be easily calculated. A new age is already within the range of our vision and it is an age of a virtually endless mastery over physical nature based on an ever-deepening understanding of it—in short, of freedom in its positive sense.

But all this is only one side of the picture. Let us not forget that in spite of such an age dawning before us, man remains confronted by "the actuality of a divided world with greater poverty, stupidity and cruelty than it has ever known". There is even the threat of the total extinction of mankind. It comes from the same mastery of physical nature so gallantly prophesied by the founders of modern philosophy.

Is there then something essentially wrong about the new vision of freedom that inspired them?

89. quoted Bernal 443.

90. quoted Bernal 447.

The question is being answered with ever-increasing clarity by recent history and therefore also by philosophers and scientists with the right understanding of history.

The new vision of freedom came to the philosophers at the dawn of the capitalist epoch. It was the epoch that brought modern science into being, thanks to the progressive bourgeoisie of the age which needed science for the gigantic revolution in the mode of production and the representatives of which "put themselves forward as representing not one special class but the whole of suffering humanity", because the fighting contingent required for the stupendous social transformation could only be furnished by the toiling classes of the period. Thus came into being modern science and along with it the modern working class—both with the historic mission of not only making the capitalist epoch obsolete but also of finally overthrowing it.

"If capitalism first made science possible, science in its turn was to make capitalism unnecessary."[91] We do not have the scope here to go into the details substantiating this brilliant formulation by one of the greatest scientists of our time. But it is necessary to note that "the actuality of a divided world with greater poverty, stupidity and cruelty than it has ever known" with which we are confronted today is an eloquent commentary on the unnecessity to which capitalism is reduced today by science. While rapidly growing possibilities of an age of hitherto undreamt of abundance are being opened up by the recent scientific discoveries, capitalism in its most advanced form finds itself obliged not only to keep the productive processes crippled but also to see that a large and growing part of the product—instead of meeting genuine human needs—is channelled to useless, wasteful and positively destructive purposes. "The clearest illustration is the tens of billions of dollars worth of goods and services which are

91. Bernal 374.

swallowed up every year by a military machine the only purpose of which is to keep the people of the world from solving their problems in the only way they can be solved, through revolutionary socialism. But it is not only those who man and supply the military machine who are engaged in an anti-human enterprise. The same can be said in varying degrees of many millions of other workers who produce and create wants for goods and services which no one needs. And so interdependent are the various sectors and branches of the economy that nearly everyone is involved in one way or another in these anti-human activities: the farmer supplying food to troops fighting against the people of Vietnam, the tool and die makers turning out the intricate machinery needed for a new automobile model, the manufacturers of paper and ink and TV sets whose products are used to control and poison the minds of the people, and so on and on and on."[92] It has in short become a system which is obliged to see "that idle men and idle machines coexist with deprivation at home and starvation abroad, that poverty grows in step with affluence, that enormous amounts of resources are wasted in frivolous and often harmful ways", that thousands at home are maimed and crippled, and that the most sinister plot is continued for murdering millions abroad.

More is not necessary. However, if capitalism has become such an irrational system as to be forced to thrive on the grossest misuse of human mastery over nature, the toiling masses forged into the organised working class by the capitalist system itself, take charge of rehabilitating science on the rational basis of socialist system. And along with the growth of the working class there grows a new philosophy—Marxism—which teaches the working class how to effect the link between natural science with social science—the mastery over physical nature with the mastery over social reality—whereby alone the new vision of freedom that dawned on Bacon and Descartes acquire its full

92. Baran & Sweezy 344.

significance. Guided by this new philosophy the working people of a vast part of the globe have already freed themselves from the fetters of the capitalist system. They show us how much man's mastery over nature can really mean in terms of the real welfare of the real men, women and children—all this within the brief period of about fifty years and in spite of suffering the most colossal devastation of a world war and in spite moreover of the wastage on armament necessitated as a deterrent against continuing threat of a more devastating war to annihilate them.

The most gigantic propaganda machinery is of course used to conceal all this from the working peoples of the capitalist world and of the developing world. Shameless techniques are being tried to opiate them. Scientific method itself—particularly of mass communication and education—is being used to retard or deflect the course of history. All sorts of newfangled philosophies are being concocted to create confusion—to distract the working people from the new vision of freedom and from the practical programme of implementing it. Notwithstanding all this, however, the technical possibilities ushered in by science refuse to remain reconciled to the fragmented social frame of private interest and exploitation. Hence there is the plot against these technical possibilities themselves—the plot to use science for the purpose of crippling it.

Not that the dangers of the immediate present are to be underrated. If however man can survive them, he has the prospect of real freedom—that of winning a new world free from avoidable human suffering and of making the limits of such suffering ever narrower.

But is man going to survive the dangers of the immediate present?

It is not for the metaphysicians' brains to answer the question. The question has to be answered by the working millions of the world today. Are they going to allow themselves to be cheated by the grossest misuse of man's mastery over nature—the cheating on which alone can thrive the social system that has become irrational and

irrelevant? Or, are they going to treat this system only as a passing episode in the evolution of society, while the new vision of freedom which it brings into being—thanks to the working hands of the exploited millions—as a permanent acquisition of humanity?

This is the most momentous question posed by history today. And it brings us back to those whom our law-givers called the *sudra*-s—the vast masses of the toiling men and women.

Our law-givers insisted that these *sudra*-s are not entitled to *mukti* or freedom. History has only an ironical commentary on this. If man can really achieve *mukti* or freedom, these toiling masses or *sudra*-s will have to act as its decisive architects. It is of course not the negative conception of *mukti* as an imaginary escape from the world. It is the positive conception of *mukti* understood as changing the world.

This brings us back to the main theme of the present work, for *what is living* in traditional Indian thought can be boldly inherited and creatively developed only by the toiling people of the country—as boldly as they are going to scrap *what is dead* in it. This is indeed part of their great historical mission of changing the country. A great deal of fearless zeal for truth is required for these purposes, and that hardly exists outside the working-class movement, where there is often the concern for other considerations and therefore also the tendency to compromise. By contrast, every step taking by our great thinkers of the past for the purpose of understanding and mastering nature—inclusive of human relations—is precious for the working people, whose interests and aspirations fully agree with these. It is because of similar considerations that Engels said, "The German working-class movement is the inheritor of the German classical philosophy."

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al-Beruni: *Alberuni's India,* ed. E. C. Sachau. reprint Delhi 1964.
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IA: *Indian Antiquary.*

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